Memories from our future
Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/32301610.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Carry On Series - Rainbow Rowell, Simon Snow & Related Fandoms
Relationship:	Tyrannus Basilton "Baz" Pitch/Simon Snow, Tyrannus Basilton "Baz" Pitch & Simon Snow
Character:	Simon Snow, Tyrannus Basilton "Baz" Pitch
Additional Tags:	Domestic Fluff, Seeing the future, Boys Kissing, Angst, Enemies to Lovers, Sexual Tension, Friends to Lovers, Husbands, sort of time travel, Fluff, Simon and Baz in the future, Boyfriends, Queer Relationship, Pre-Book 1: Carry On, Banter, Slow Burn, Emotional Healing, Baz licking blood off Simon, selflove, Snow's growling stomach is a character at this point, Baz and Simon actually communicating, Making Out, Written Pre-Any Way the Wind Blows (Simon Snow), Mystery, Adventure & Romance, Romance, mythical creatures, Happy Ending, Canon Divergent
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2021-07-01 Completed: 2021-07-24 Chapters: 12/12 Words: 66475

Memories from our future

by alleycat0306

Summary

Simon gets visions from a possible future in which he has a life after the Humdrum. And that life is sickeningly sweet and happy with Baz (also quite hot and steamy at times). However, the mysterious creature that granted Simon this power is now a cause for worry and fear - and Baz is the only one around to help. (Surprise! Surprise!)
The story follows Simon and Baz as they discover secrets about themselves and about each other. (And they find their way to each other, because Snowbaz is life).

Notes

Any Way the Wind Blows is here but i can't get it yet, because where i live they don't know I need AWTWB or I will die. Sooo, I need to have a dose of HEA.
Basically, this fic is me indulging my desire for a happy life for Simon and Baz. I want to see them together, happy, in love, going through life, having a family, picking up wallflowers for fuck's sake! So this fic is a result of my desire. Hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it. I also want to see some people pay for being assholes *ahem*theMage*ahem*.

Chapter 1

SIMON

The creature is staring at me, and its eyes are blue. The kind of blue that you get when you spill ink on already blue paper. Dark. intense. Menacing. Alien almost. All my hairs are standing on ends, my heart is hammering a panicked rhythm in my chest. I have bitten the inside of my mouth so many times since I got lost in the Woods that I can taste the coppery hint of blood.

I have no idea what creature this is. A dragon land siren? It is looming tall above me, looks like something born out of dragon and human. It has blue scales that shimmer and change shape and colour. What I first think are wings are wrapped around the creature like a Toga. When I first see it I yelp in panic and hold my sword in front of me, ready to fight.

“Put your tooth pick away, Mage. It won’t hurt me and I won’t hurt you.” It doesn't move its mouth while speaking. Why doesn't it move its mouth?

Before I decide what to do with this question, the creature goes on, sniffing.

“Your fate is so tangled. Your futures are shifting.” It speaks directly to my mind. I seem to be in some kind of trap, magickal most likely. Because I can't move. My body isn't listening to me. I am stuck here. And now even my mind is in the creature’s hands. Paws? Claws? whatever. I cannot see because her limbs are covered in a veil of mist-like substance.

“My futures? Plural?”

The creature nods and blue shimmering light follows its movement.

“There’s more of me?”

“There’s one of you.” the tone of this sounds very patronizing.

“But you said futures. plural.” I counter.

“There’s *one* of you and *many* paths that you can take. There is never one fixed future for the likes of you.”

“Mages?”

“Humans, pixies, vampires… creatures with moral agency and partial freedom of will,” it says dismissively.

“Oh.” It sounds strange to be put in the same category with vampires. It adds salt to an existing wound seeing as I got myself in this mess while following Baz, trying to figure out what he is plotting against me or/and to catch him in the act of being a vampire. I did hear him whisper my name to Niall and Dev several times now. And I catch him watching me when he thinks I am not noticing. His plotting is driving me slowly to madness. Gahhh, I wish I knew what he is preparing to unleash on me, so that I am prepared when he strikes...

“I can help you with that.” The voice sounds in my head and I startle. Does the creature read minds?

It doesn’t reply to that.

“How?” I ask instead. *Aloud.* To maintain at least some semblance of normalcy in this abnormal situation.

“I can give you a glimpse into one of your futures.” she waves her arm in front of me and I get a closer look at what I thought was mist or light or something - those are small insects, like living snowflakes of a glacial blue, swarming around her. They form a cloud around her lower limbs. When she moves they follow her.

“Which one of my er... futures?”

“You choose: I can show you one that is most probable, or one that is least probable. I can show you one that you will enjoy, one that you will hate… You choose.”

“What do *you* get from it?” I am suspicious but also very intrigued.

The creature laughs.

“I get to touch your magic. For 3 to 5 days you will be able to see into one future that you choose, and I will be able to touch your magic.”

That sounds dirty. Touching my magic.

“How will you use it?” I have a lot of it. I probably will not miss it. But still, I would rather not have it used for evil.

“I will *study* it. Not use it!” The creature makes a face that I translate as its equivalent of rolling eyes. "There are higher interests in this world than using and consuming. My kind is more interested in learning and understanding.”

“What is your kind?” I ask and immediately feel a sort of tension gathering in my sternum, coming from outside and pushing inside me. I reformulate: “*What ... Who* are you?”

“I am Frigg and Vör’s daughter. Transformed into Ethereal by their eternal love.”

Ok. A little bit over dramatic. I get a feeling that Baz would love this type of talk and would be able to keep up with it. He probably would know who these Frigg and the other one are.

“What will it be then, mageling?”

Which future should I see to maximize my preparedness for Baz’s plotting...? And the Humdrum’s. I add hastily in my mind.

Sometimes Baz seems a more present problem, albeit a nuisance rather than a great threat to the whole of magic, but still. He is always there, in the front of my mind, while the Humdrum is more like a white noise that I learned to tune out.

“I want to see the future that I least expect.” I declare on an impulse.

She nods.

“And so be it.”

I feel a slash on my forearm, underneath my shirt and coat. I yelp. “It is done.” The creature announces then she dissolves in blue mist.

“Wait! How do I find my way out?” I yell but no one is there to answer.

***

I choose a random path and try not to panic too much. In December night falls early and aggressively. Especially in the woods.

I decide to try my luck with a spell, I wouldn’t want to be stuck here after dark… Baz might decide to use me as prey…

“**Find my way!**” I wave my wand, doing it all wrong probably.

The spell is supposed to work as a pull to a certain direction (the opposite in which I started). Because my magic is uncontrollable, the spell feels as if someone tied a rope around my middle and is aggressively pulling me. I lose my balance after the first pull, stumble and almost fall face forward.

Fuck.

I quickly realize that if I want to *walk* out of the woods on my two feet and not be dragged out of them, I will have to run. My stomach grumbles - there goes my energy storage down the drain… (I've been a total wreck today. Never got the chance to eat, because Baz kept moving around in random patterns. I *had* to follow him. Really. me starving is his fault.)

It takes me around twenty minutes to get out of the thick of it. 20 minutes of running and once falling when the pull made a sharp turn and being dragged through leaves and grass for at least 5 meters before reassembling and getting up on my feet.

Needless to say I am cursing like a sailor all the way.

We - the Pull has become personalized in my mind - reach the Watford grounds right before the last sun rays fade away.

I expect the Pull to disappear but instead of going away it drags me to the right, along the perimeter.

Nooo! I grind my teeth. The entrance is the other way around!

I barely have time to catch my breath. If this was Penny she would already be canceling the first spell, punishing it somehow, cleaning herself from the leaves and dirt, and also spelling some food in her hand. Oh, and healing the cut on the forearm

I wish she were here. I wish I were with her.

Finally when the Pull stops, it literally throws me on the ground. I groan in pain - I am pretty sure spells aren’t supposed to be assholes to the mage casting them.

I get on my knees and cough out a dry leaf. Fucking Normals fucking up the climate. We did not have a drop of snow this winter! Not even a hint. It feels like a prolonged autumn - and not the colorful autumn, more like the afterparty drunk guest of an autumn that keeps finding reasons not to sod off home and ruins the host’s day. So instead of falling on a cushion of snow, I get a bedding of wet twigs and dirty leaves.

“Ahem”. Someone clears their throat. I look up and groan loudly. There he is. The bane of my existence. Basil Pitch. Looking innocently at me, as if he hasn’t been hunting and plotting all year long right under my nose!

“Need a hand?” he offers and smiles brightly, extending his perfectly manicured hand to help me up. Oh, how I loathe him!

Before I tell him to shove that hand up his arse, the crappy woods disappear, Baz in his perfectly tailored dark green coat disappears, even the twilight goes away.

I am lying on the ground. The sky is bright blue and in places even turquoise. So pretty, *I think. The sound of waves crashing lulls me into sleep. I probably shouldn’t fall asleep in my trunks only. I burn quicker than I tan. I move the necklace chain to the side as it heats up under the sun burning me. I don't take it off. I never do.*

“Need a hand?” a familiar voice says from above me. I squint at the figure covering the sun, now. Broad shoulders, long black shaggy hair, legs that store his height advantage. A lean arm extended to me, palm up. Long fingers that play the violin and know how to caress me just right.

His features are hooded in shadows, I can’t look at him properly because of the blinding sun shining right in his back. But I know this face so well. I could close my eyes and see the pouting mouth, the sharp nose, the laughing eyes. The chin I like to bite ever so often.

Joy tugs at the corners of my mouth, pulling them up. Anticipation bubbles in the middle of my chest.

“I wouldn’t mind a hand. Where do you plan to put it?” I ask coyly.

He laughs, mirth spilling out of him in loud and clear har-har-s.

“Get your mind out of the gutter, love,” he reaches down to take my hand, to pull me up. “All those dirty thoughts swirling around in that beautiful mind of yours. I love it.”

Instead of letting him pull me up, I pull him down on top of me. He cushions his fall into a push up, hands beside my shoulders. Some sand flies in my hair from his acrobatic landing. I shake my head to get it out but more gets in.

“Hello, darling.” I say as he lowers himself on his elbows, transferring most of his delicious weight onto me. My palms move underneath his shirt, on his back, loving the feel of muscles moving underneath my touch. He is warm like the water in the sea. One of his legs is in between mine and I wrap myself around him. Mine. *I tell him with my body.*

“Hello, love.” Baz whispers and plants his mouth on mine.

I jerk away, scrambling backwards like a crazed crab. What the fucking fuck?! I stop moving and throw an accusing stare at Baz. At this shitty December Watford Baz, with hair slicked back instead of falling freely around his face, and thinner, younger, with the same pouting mouth but less likely to throw his head back with a carefree laugh. With less crinkles at the corner of his eyes… I can see *that* Baz with my mind’s eyes as I compare him with *this* one.

I can feel the pressure of *that* Baz’s mouth on mine while I glare at *this* one. My heart is going a

thousand kilometers per hour.

“Whoa, Snow. Slow down, mate. What’s wrong?” His eyes are wide with worry.

“Piss off!” I can feel myself starting to smoke a little.

The worry goes away and he slips on the same expression he wears almost every time we interact, that of cool contempt.

“You look like the Woods *shat* you here.” His boot kicks mine and I recoil. “Did your evening trip take an unexpected turn?” he smirks, one perfect eyebrow raised.

“Piss off, Baz!”

He laughs once. And this laughter is so wrong, so not like the one in the vision that I feel like crying. This laughter is mean.

“There he is! The Chosen One we all know and love, (well, tolerate more like it), demonstrating his delightful rich vocabulary!”

I can’t speak. I can’t process anything right now.

He called me *love.* The word came from *this* mouth. This same mouth that I want to punch now... I wanted so badly to kiss in that vision!

It must be a mistake. The creature gave me the wrong visions. The wrong future. She is mistaken. I get up awkwardly, hands in dirt and scratches.

My arm is still slightly bleeding from where the Creature took my blood.

As if on cue, Baz’s nostrils flare, his eyes narrow.

“What happened to you, Snow? You're bleeding.”

“Why should you care? YOU happened to me!” I yell at him and get my sword out. a few sparks fly to the leaves, but they are wet and don't catch fire. “This is all you!” The more I talk the more convinced I become that this is an elaborate plan by Baz, that the creature and the woods were some kind of hallucination. That the visions are all part of it. Of *the* Plot! Did he put something in my food? Did he use a spell? I shake my head and focus my eyes on Baz.

He has taken a step back and his wand out, and is snarling at me, baring his human canines.

“Come on, you coward, show me your fangs!” I rage at him.

Hello, love. Husky voice filled with warmth rings in my ears. It repeats again and again until all I can hear is the whoosh of my blood and the *Hello, love, Hello, love, love….*

BAZ

Simon Snow has gone crazy.

I might have had something to do with it, but I think most of the credit should go to him and his paranoia regarding me plotting.

I watch as his face goes white and then his eyelids flutter once. He drops his sword and starts falling to the ground. On impulse I leap to his side and grab his fainted body before it hits the ground.

Simon Snow has fainted.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Baz takes care of Simon (sweet).
Simon has a vision about his potential future life and it throws a rock into his habit of not thinking and now he veers into the realm of overthinking. Also, Simon believes that his visions are a part of Baz's evil plot. (predictable)
Also Baz is a philosophy boy in this fic.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

SIMON

“Oh My Gawd! You look so cute together!” The girl has blonde hair and reminds me of Agatha when she was at school, but in a more bouncy and fake way.

We are licking dairy free ice cream from two identical cones, except mine is chocolate and his is strawberry, our favorites.

“Luce’s lactose intolerance pays off well,” I tell him, slurping at the melting deliciousness. Baz takes off his sun glasses and props them on my nose. “Handsome.” he declares and his knuckles trace the shape of my face. It tingles.

Baz scratches lightly the five o clock shadow on my skin as he turns my face to his. He ruffles my curls by running his fingers through my hair and examines his handiwork. Then he gives me his ice cream to hold while he takes an elastic band off his wrist and ties my hair in a bun.

“Can I take your picture for my account?” The girl is still there. Her intrusion breaks our moment. She sounds American. Must be a tourist.

Baz squeezes my hand, letting me know he wants to reply. “No,” he says dryly and I snort. So much for being cute. The girl flusters and goes away. I kiss him right under his jaw and murmur in his ear: “Rude.”

“You like me rude.” he replies, taking a bite of my ice cream then licking his.

“Correction, I love you rude.”

We grin at each other and I reach for a kiss, taking some of the chocolate ice cream back with a swirl of my tongue that makes him moan. We break apart.

After all this time, it still feels amazing to be *with him.*

The day is bright, unnaturally so for London: he must hate it. But the hat he is wearing for protection makes him look fabulous. His shirt has a bright pink unicorn puking galaxies and below it there’s a print: When you find out that Dyogenes was magickal. *I bought him the shirt and he still fanboys over it on a regular basis. He still grins when he first puts it on and looks in the mirror. Normals like to be obnoxious about the spelling, stopping to tell us that magickal is spelled*

wrong. Baz cast a sneezing spell once on a particularly annoying old lady that did that.

His shorts are white with sharpie comic strips drawn on them. Luce drew them. For a 6 year old she is extremely gifted. Today, Baz is rocking a pair of flip flops. Casual Baz does it for me. We are on vacation after all.

"Do you think Bunce got lost?" He asks, rubbing his nose in my neck. Inhaling. I hold back a moan. His touches get me all the time. I steal a quick kiss before replying: "I think Auntie Penny is getting ripped off."

He chuckles at that. Puff of air fanning my neck where he nibbles at it.

Then the door to the store opens and out comes Penelope, we put some distance between each other, like embarrassed teenagers caught snogging.

Penny is wearing a long yellow summer dress and a hat matching Baz's. I remember it was his gift to them. Friendship hats *he'd called them. Cheesy Baz does it for me too.*

She holds the door open while grinning at us. Behind her, out comes a kid with two huge boxes in her arms. Our *kid.*

"Daddy, look what Auntie Penny volunteered *to buy!" she squeals and her black curls bounce with her hopping. A box tips to the side and Penny sighs, straightening it: "She insisted on carrying everything herself. And "volunteered" is a strong word for* the absolute con *that happened inside there. I naively thought we went in for ONE bracelet."*

"We did!" Lucy balances the boxes in one small hand to show us the violet bracelet on the other. "We ended up buying all the other cool stuff, though. It was fun." she adds and grins widely, pushing her tongue through the gap of her lost front baby teeth.

"She learned this from you. Cunning brilliant mind in the making. Criminal mastermind loading." I inform Baz and give Penny a hug, holding my ice cream to the side not to stain her dress.

"How was your anniversary brunch?" Penny asks while hugging Baz. I find it incredibly sweet that she knows she doesn't have to stand on her toes because Baz always makes sure to bend down for her hugs. He doesn't calculate for the ice cream though, and it topples over and splashes on the pavement. Lucy giggles and exchanges her boxes for my ice cream. "Thank you, daddy! Chocolate is my favorite!"

"Erm.." I avoid Penny's gaze while I take the boxes from Lucy's arms.

"We ended up staying in." replies a smug Baz. "If you know what I mean." And to make things even clearer he wiggles his brows. Penny laughs.

I blush. You would think that at the age of 35 blushing would stop, but just like random pimples it didn't.

"Niiiice," sings Penny and punches me playfully.

"So you're hungry?" she inquires fondly.

"FAMISHED!" I reply, getting so excited by the prospect of food that I almost drop the boxes.

BAZ

Snow is lying on his bed and his stomach is growling every two minutes. I try no to stare at him too much, but whenever he makes any kind of sound I find myself checking on him.

How typical of him to be the center of (my) attention even when he is passed out.

The nurse said it was exhaustion, cold and shock that led him to faint.

Apparently the stupid fool has been following me around for the entire day and missed all his meals, then got himself into some mess in the forest and then fainted at my feet.

What could have given him shock, I have no idea.

"Darling, what would you like to eat?" Snow mumbles in his sleep and I feel myself tense.

Is he dreaming of Wellbelove? They broke up a week ago - according to Niall's info - and this year Snow will not spend Christmas at the Wellbelove's. I kick his bed and he startles in his sleep and shuts up.

The nurse said his vitals are ok, he just needs to rest. When I brought Snow to the infirmary he looked just passed out - I had fixed his clothes and his other wounds. Otherwise maybe she wouldn't have been so eager to send him back to our room...

I think maybe I shouldn't have cast **Get well soon!** to get rid of his scratches on palms and some cut on his forearm. I couldn't see it because I didn't go around undressing Snow, but I could smell the blood through the layers of clothes. Good thing he doesn't take off that cursed cross amulet of his.

And **Clean as a whistle** was mostly a courtesy to my designer coat. And also, it didn't feel right to have Simon Snow look like what the cat dragged in. (more than the usual at least)

I told the nurse that I found him like that, and even though she frowned she didn't express her doubts. I didn't care. I just wanted him in the hands of a professional. I carried him and he didn't wake up. I magicked myself with **bad news travels fast** but didn't attempt any spells to snap Snow out of his unconsciousness. Neither did the nurse, "No need for wasting magic when the body can take care of it." She said calmly when I demanded she fix Snow.

"You do know who he is, right? If the Mage finds out..."

"The Mage is not on the campus. Besides. In this infirmary everyone is equal, no one is special or *chosen.* " She replied and I had to admit I respected her for it.

Because of Christmas holidays, the entire Watford is extremely understaffed, so there is only the Nurse in the infirmary. Most kids left tonight and the few left are leaving tomorrow. Me included.

I try not to feel compassion that Snow will spend Christmas alone. In Watford. How pathetic. How

lonely. How he must hate it.

At least I have a judgmental family to surround myself with during the holidays. I told Dad last year that I am gay, to curve his expectations of an heir, but I think he is still in denial. He never acknowledges it. He's attitude is: "We'll find you a girl from a good magickal family."

But at least he hasn't shunned me. I *am* a monster and he doesn't acknowledge that either. It means I have someone in my team, even if reluctantly.

And Snow doesn't have anyone. (Except Bunce, but she isn't here, is she?)

And now he doesn't even have Wellbelove. (I can't say I am not happy that that is no longer a thing.)

I wonder why he refused to go with Bunce, I am sure she extended an invitation.

Snow is currently curled in a ball. He looks like a dog that has been kicked and is recovering in a corner. He is frowning this deep frown that I want to smooth with my thumb and his curls are in disarray. A bronze halo of sweaty curls.

Do not feel sorry for him. Do not feel sorry for him . I beg myself, but as always in these situations I don't listen to myself.

I do feel sorry for him. My heart whines in my chest, yearning to go to him, move the curls stuck to his face away, stroke his forehead - yes! Check for temperature! That's an acceptable excuse to touch someone's forehead, right? RIGHT?

I ball my hands in fists and continue packing. Aunt Fiona is supposed to pick me up tomorrow. Snow mutters something in his sleep and I try to ignore him. But I can't. He thrashes and can't seem to keep still, he goes from curled into a ball to going through an exorcism.

I think of a way to wake him.

Kiss him! My brain suggests. I ignore it although I throw a quick glance to his lips.

What happened in the woods, I wonder. He came out disheveled and angry. It was most definitely not my fault he got lost. He is a horrible spy and a horrible tracker. And gets lost in a square meter, apparently. For a nemesis he is quite inapt.

And then, before he fainted, he seemed horrified.

Not even in the face of dragons have I seen Snow *horrified.*

It makes me uneasy. To know that something has him so scared.

I give up on packing, I am not able to concentrate - I packed 5 shirts and all the pens in the

drawers. That won't do. I have enough pens at home.

So I sit by his bed, legs propped on mine, I open a book of Philosophy on my lap. *The ethical dilemmas of Future Seers or the Ethics of Precognition* by Delorious Tettori. It is an intellectual rollercoaster taking the reader from the ancient magickal Greece and into the postmodernism of magickal prophecies, soon enough I am immersed in the book, making notes, and stopping at times to think.

I picked up the book after yet another time I heard talk about the prophecies featuring Snow. I thought it would be a light read and an easy way to make him more paranoid. Obviously I was wrong on both fronts. I don't think he noticed the title or made any connections. I don't know that he *knows* that prophecies fall under the category of Future seeing Magic...

When Snow's stomach growls an especially long growl I decide to go scavenge some food in the kitchen for when he wakes up.

Also to stretch my legs.

I return with a plate of hummus with celery sticks and crackers as well as 2 sandwiches and some fruit.

I smell smoke before even reaching the room.

Snow is on his bed pouring over the book I left - which surprises me, I have never seen him read this avidly. He is smart, but Snow is not a reader. He has the attention span of a puppy in the park.

When he hears me come in he raises his head, and even though he looks tired, he seems enraged. His eyes are wild and yes, a little insane.

He snaps the book close and leaps to his feet, book in hand, holding it a little too tightly.

"Aha!" He shouts. "Finally! Proof!"

I am utterly confused. I snap a celery stick with my teeth and raise my eyebrows to communicate confusion and surprise. I am great at communicating with my eyebrows: Snow grows livid every time I do it. Once we had a full conversation like this where I pushed all his buttons using mimicry, gestures and sometimes exclamations. It was one good day.

I expect him to start sparking any minute. The smell of smoke intensifies. WHY am i pushing him? I don't know. In my defense, I am a pyro and I like the smell of smoke.

He jumps off the bed and sways, nearly toppling over. I reach out to steady him with one hand while settling the plate on the desk. He swats at my hand.

"Get away from me!" He snarls and his stomach growls.

"I *will.* Tomorrow morning. When I leave for Christmas." I inform him with a mask of indifference when in truth I am happy he woke up and has enough energy if not enough brains to yell at me.

He sways again and flops on the bed like a human-shaped pancake. Accidentally sits on mine (bed, not pancake). I don't know what to do with Snow on my bed. I imagine he's sat there before. I *smelled* him on my bed several times. But I have never witnessed it.

This is the place where I sleep, the place where I lay and dream. And there he is. In the same place. It's just that we're there at different times.

"Why are you reading this?" His abrupt question jolts me to focus. The smokey tension has dissipated. His initial anger has turned to something else.

"Because I'm bored with the school program?" I humour him with an answer.

"Lie! You're reading this because you obviously have done something to me and are trying to find an ethical loophole, for this - this--" he struggles to find words and forgets to inhale.

"Breathe, Snow. Give the brain some oxygen and words will come to you." I advise him sagely while plopping myself on *his* bed and crunching on a celery stick. I find that eating crunchy vegetables doesn't pop my fangs out, so I am safe.

He stares at me - I wonder if he realizes it's the first time he sees me eating. It might have short circuited his brain because his face forgets to be angry.

"A fly might get in, if you keep your mouth open," I tell him, leaning back on his bed. His smell is stronger here. I enjoy every bit of being here.

It takes him a few seconds of loading info and analyzing it to realize that 1. I am on his bed and he on mine

and 2. He is still holding the book up in the air, like a frozen statue

He drops his hand.

"Get off my bed!" he sounds outraged.

"Gladly! Stop occupying mine, you fainting maiden." I throw the last bit of the celery in his head. It is childish but it looks funny and he makes a surprised but angry turtle face. Which is both adorable and hilarious.

He reddens as he jumps from my bed. He reaches to his thigh, murmuring the words to summon his sword and nothing happens.

"Where is my sword?" he roars.

"In your arse apparently, where the massive stick is up as well." I giggle a little, am so proud of this reply - and of the fact that I had the presence of mind to retrieve the sword when Snow fainted but also to fucking hide it before he woke up. I have seen him hack a dragon with that thing.

It takes him a moment to understand my point, but eventually he does. He doesn't seem amused at all.

He gesticulates with the book, inhaling and probably preparing to yell at me some more.

I stop him before he starts.

“Oi, Snow. Stop it, now! Press pause!” I throw my hands in the air and then smooth my hair backwards in exasperation. “Eat something. I am not going anywhere. I will not deprive you of your new crazy paranoid speech moment. Just eat something. You fainted. You’ve been out for over 4 hours. It’s almost 10 pm now” He just stares at me. “The nurse says that’s because you’re an idiot.”

“What?” his chest deflates.

“Well, she formulated it in more words: not eating, running around in the cold, receiving some kind of shock, etc tomato- tomAto.” I roll my eyes at him.

I stand up and push the plate in his hands, extracting the book from his clenched fingers..

He accepts the plate and looks at it suspiciously. Then at me. Then at the book, at the food and at me.

“The poison’s in the hummus.” I tell him, winking conspiratorially.

He eyes the dipped celery stick suspiciously, apparently taking me seriously.

“For fuck’s...” I lean over, reach towards him and grab his hand with the celery stick and shove the hummus-ed end in my mouth, biting it off. He is stunned - I am a little surprised of my actions too, but he is being so ridiculous!

I would like to pretend I am dying in convulsions as a result, but I think he has had enough shocks for today.

His stomach growls and he finally starts eating. Carefully eyeing me all the time, like I might burst into flames or song any second now. I re-open my book, sit cross-legged on my bed, facing him, and read. Or pretend to, anyway, I read the words but the meaning escapes me. I can feel Snow’s stare on me and it’s making me fidgety.

I sigh loudly and close the book.

“Snow, I swear on Merlin’s beard that I will be here when you finish eating. Someone has to take your body out and hide it, no?” His eyes bulge.

“You’re joking.” he says with his mouth full. Afraid to swallow. A crumb flies out and in between our beds.

“No, I am serious, you humourless nightmare.” I roll my eyes. “Of course I am kidding. I mean your intense stares are weirding me out. You will have a chance to accuse me and I will have a chance to laugh heartily at whatever ridiculous stuff you’ve come up with. Trust me, I wouldn’t miss it for the world.”

He dials down the intensity of the stare, but doesn’t look away. So I stare back. It’s not often that I have the chance to do it - to look into his eyes, to watch him while he knows he is being watched. There is a sort of intimacy there, and it makes me warm all over.

He doesn’t seem horrified anymore. Nor angry.

“Did you bring my sword from the field?”

“Duh.”

He looks relieved.

“Will you give it to me?”

Yea I will give it to you. Fuck, why does he have to formulate things like this? And he is completely oblivious of what comes out of his mouth.

“Do you want me to give it to you?” *baby?*

Will he notice now?

No. He just looks confused. And small. Completely taking the wind out of my dirty jokes.

“Of course!”

“Ok. When I am certain you will not try to slice me like a tomato, I might consider it.”

It takes him only a few minutes of chomping and crunching to finish off the food. And now the plate is empty in his hands. (he ate even the celery sticks!! I have never seen Snow eat so many vegetables in one sitting. Usually, if he cannot dip something in butter he doesn’t bother with it). Then he looks around for more. Apparently he has a black hole for a stomach. I don’t know why I am surprised. I mean, I have observed him eat unnaturally large portions of food since the first year at Watford.

I point at my drawer- “You can take some vinegar and salt chips from my stash.”

He leaps off the bed, getting back all his dexterity at the prospect of more food, opens the drawer without asking which one! He must have gone through my stuff to know that the chips are there. I don’t comment and he opens them, sitting on the edge of the bed, facing me.

He extends the open package and I refuse politely. Then he eats. In silence. While we’re watching each other like weirdos.

He wipes his mouth with the back of his hand like an uncivilized beast he is and says, “Thank you.”

I am so surprised that the first thing that comes out of his mouth is not an insult that for a second I forget how human beings reply to thank you’s.

“Pardon?”

“Thanks for the food. I appreciate it.”

I nod. Two thank you-s in a row? I am sorry, I will need a few days to process this.

“So what happened?”

“Why are you reading this?”

We both speak simultaneously.

He looks so tired and spent that I take mercy on him and go with an honest response. “Because it is interesting. I like philosophy.”

He frowns so hard I think it will leave a permanent mark on his forehead.

There is a moment of silence in which I wonder why I volunteered that last bit of information. He doesn’t need to know that. I don’t need to share that. But I want to. I want him to know me as more than the vampire enemy with great style.

“Do you know who Dyogenes is?” his question falls out of the blue.

“Do *you* ?” I counter immediately.

I would fall off the bed right now if it turns out he knows Dyogenes, the most bad-ass cynic of history. *“Do you, Snow?”* I repeat with urgency, because if he does, then I might just faint myself.

We do not study him at Watford, if Snow knows about him, then, Crowley, it must mean he did some individual research?! Snow and individual research in the same sentence breaks my world.

I might kiss him right now and here, damned be all consequences.

“Yes.” he says and my heart leaps. “I mean, No, not really.” he admits.

I sigh in relief and relax a little.

“I just...” he looks at the ceiling and then back at me, heaves another sigh. “I don’t.”

A few minutes ago he was yelling and now he is sighing. I cannot make sense of him today. His eyes are searching my face, eyebrows knit together.

“Did you do something to my brain?” he asks suddenly. I scowl. What a stupid question. If I had the possibility to do anything with his brain we’d be snogging now and he’d be declaring his undying love for me.

“I am not dignifying that with an answer, Snow. You are being more ridiculous than usual.”

He is biting his lips, thinking hard. I can practically *hear* him thinking, the effort is so visible on his face.

“I wish Penny was here. She makes such good lists. And plans.” I think he says that more to himself than to me, so I do not comment.

I watch him openly, basking in this moment. Whatever weird shit is happening, I still have this. He lets me watch him, his face is unguarded as he thinks, different emotions pass through, it seems like he is battling something inside.

“If you could eat one flavour of ice-cream, like, forever. What would it be?”

The question is so random and so unexpected that I blurt out the answer without thinking too much about it, “Strawberry.” and then, “What’s with the 20 questions, are you practicing some sort of interview skills? You’re doing horribly.”

He flops on his back and I can’t read his expression. To make sure I never do, he covers his face with his hands.

“Oh, Merlin and Jesus fucking Christ, this is a catastrophe...” I hear him mumble underneath the cover of his palms.

“What is? Aside from your brain function, that is.”

“The fact that I *know* your favorite ice cream flavour!” he yells, throwing the pillow in my general direction. The pillow hits the wall and falls between the bed and the wall. Well, I'm not gonna get it.

“Duh. I just told you, didn’t I? Why are you being especially thick today?”

He groans again in his palms.

“Do you know any spells that could put me to sleep for 3 to 5 days?” He sounds anguished.

“I can knock you in the head with a heavy object, it might work.”

“Gahhh!”

“Ok. With a *really* heavy object, since your skull is so thick.”

“Argh!”

“Or I could actually poison you? You seem to really want me to.”

He starts laughing then. A little hysterical, but I like it better than the groaning.

I reach for the pillow he threw earlier and fluff it on my lap, settling the book on top of it.

“One more question, Snow. I give you *one* more question, and then you’ll start answering mine.” I bend at the middle and reach for his right leg that is hanging off the bed and is closer to me and pull him by his (cute) socked foot to get his attention. “Hear me, you git? Or you’ll never see your damned sword again. I will melt it and make it into bread knives that I will then proceed to sell on e-bay. Clear?”

He growls in his palms and pulls his foot out of my reach. “Is that a threat, Basil?” he has his palm up, hand in my direction

I mimic his gesture “Is that a stupid question, Snow?” I throw his pillow into his face for good measure. He grinds his teeth together in annoyance.

A spark is coming back in his eyes. Mutual antagonization is something that comes naturally to us. It makes him comfortable, I think. He starts looking more like his usual self - it could be that the food is finally settling in, or he is reaching the end of this *episode.* But I like to think it’s my wit that gets him energized.

With a jerky move, he sits up wringing his hands so hard I think he might dislocate a wrist or something.

“Ok. One more question with an honest answer and then, I will answer all of yours.”

“Don’t flatter yourself, Snow. I don’t have that many.”

I have *billions* ! I want all the honesty he has to volunteer. But he can’t know how eager I am. SO I feign haughty indifference. My favourite kind, right after bored indifference.

He takes forever to make up his mind, so I yawn loudly.

“The question. Now. or else the offer is retracted.”

“Wait, no!” he physically reaches out to me, fingers wrapping around my wrist, as if I am actually taking something he has in reach. I smirk a little. He removes his hand as if burnt. And then he asks his question and my smirk falls flat:

“Are you gay?”

Chapter End Notes

i had a lot of fun writing this))

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

> Things that happen in this chapter: More (sexy cute) visions, more trying to figure out what's happening. Simon pining after Baz. Baz being confused, but a complete sweetheart, nonetheless. It snows.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

SIMON

“I don’t think my sexuality is of your concern, you tactless git!” his face is impassive. But his voice is higher pitched than usual.

“You *gave* me one question,” I remind him.

He purses his lips, “When choosing between the gay question and the vampire one, you chose the gay one? What a pity.”

I mentally slap myself. I *could have* made him admit he was a vampire, but it seemed irrelevant. Like, the gay question was on the top of my mind, on the tip of my tongue.

Besides, I adopt a kid with this man in the future. I think it makes no difference to me that he is a vampire. Plus I know he is one. He hasn’t confirmed it and it has slowly been driving me mad, but… yeah. Fuck. I should have asked the vampire question, since the visions are kind of pretty clear on the type of relationships Baz prefers.

“No, I am not straight. And it shouldn’t be any of your fucking business,”

He stands up and goes to the bathroom. “But since you are more pathetic today than you usually are, I am bothering with an answer. You dimwitted twat.” I hear the tap water turn on and when he comes back his hairline is wet and his hair is freshly slicked back.

“So you’re a gay vampire?” I try to sneak that in when he comes back.

“Not a chance you, sly cur. That’s an extra question we did not agree upon.” He faces me with his hands on his hips. “Now it’s my turn.”

He takes one deep breath as he stands there, looming, hands on waist, nostrils flaring, drilling me with his intense angry gaze: ”What the actual fuck is going on with you? That’s the first question. And… wait, no. This is it. This is the ONLY question I want to know the answer to!”

He seems to be angry with me. I rarely catch Baz losing his cool. But I think I finally pushed him to the edge of his patience.

“I… I ermm” My delightful answer does not delight him much.

He closes his eyes and massages his temples and speaks through gritted teeth.

“Please explain to me the past few hours because I am mystified!”

“I am completely, utterly mystified as to how your brain works, love!” Baz says through wheezing laughs when I show him the wallpaper I allegedly chose.

“What?” I protest, trying to sound upset, but his laughter is infectious. I like him like this, giddy with the excitement brought by change. I feel like I am privileged to get this version of Baz while everyone else gets the ruthless Baz.

I look at the sample again, making a full show out of it. “It has circles and *squares! It’s a no brainer!”*

He grabs my head with both hands and brings me forcefully into his space, kissing loudly the top of my head.

“Oh, you poor lovely peasant. Obviously, I am the only one in this duo that has any semblance of taste. So I will spare you the agony of trying to choose anything on your own.”

“What if I put my foot down, huh? I want the lime wallpaper.” I stomp my foot for emphasis. The floor is padded with something so my gesture has even less impact than expected. And the initial expectations were low indeed. Then I add: “With the emotionally drawn circles.”

“ And *squares,” he chimes in, all crinkles and smiles. Why is my treacherous face smiling? I try to wipe the smile off with my hand, but it doesn’t work. It is a simple Pavlovian reflex at this point: see Baz smile, smile back.*

“ And *squares!” I echo.*

“Where would you have it?” he asks, crossing his arms and launching himself on the closest sofa. He beckons me to join him. I arch my eyebrows at him and stay firm in my place.

“In the bedroom.” I affirm boldly, tipping my chin.

He roars with laughter, head thrown back.

It is a sight.

“Neither of us would get any, if that horrible monstrosity hangs on our walls in the bedroom. *I would be put off just looking at it* ! *”*

He reaches for my waist and pulls me into him. We end up in a cuddly half lying-half sitting position. Sprawled on the sofa as if we own the place.

There are a couple more customers browsing the shop but they pay us no attention. Twenty year olds are supposed to be loud and over the top. We’re just being who we’re supposed to be. Young and in love and moving into our first flat.

My back is on his chest and my head rests on his shoulder as we examine the sample book.

He drapes a casual leg over my thighs, and whispers in my ear. “If this hideous thing gets to live in the bedroom, then we should probably move the sex dungeon into the study.” He bites my ear and launches goosebumps on my skin. “I don’t remember the sex dungeon in the flat plans.”

“Hmmm,” he hums, nibbling at my ear, sucking at the soft spot underneath it. Shivers run down my spine. “It was supposed to be a surprise sex dungeon.”

I laugh hard at that and imagine Penny’s face when she would come to visit and find a room with a constant sock on the door.

“Hey,” Baz murmurs earnestly after a few moments of delirious snogging. “If you really like it, we can drape the entire house in squares and circles and triangles. I don’t give a fuck, as long as you’re the one living with me in it.”

I roll my eyes, “I was just teasing, Baz.”

He exhales loudly, “Oh thank Chomsky!”

“I actually think number 67 is nice. Something you’d like as well.” I reach for the catalogue that has fallen to the floor and hand him the book with samples.

“Are you sure you don’t mean 69?” he wiggles his eyebrows in a ridiculous fashion as he leaves through the catalogue.

I snort into his chest, inhaling the beloved scent of cedar. Some things never change. Thank Merlin.

“This is not that *kind of catalogue, babe.”*

“Snow! Where have you gone?” Baz has made the tip of his wand shine like a flashlight and is trying to gage my reaction, blinding me with the light. I push him away forcefully and end up throwing him off balance. I try to rebalance him, but am too forceful and he topples back on me. We bump foreheads and he yelps in pain.

“Sorry,” I mutter, flustered. The smell of cedar and bergamot fills my nose, my lungs, my being. I am a cedar and bergamot addict. He makes a move to stand up but my hand has fisted at the back of his neck, in the collar of his shirt and I can’t unclench it. (Help! My hand has gone rogue!)

These visions are so real, every feeling, every want, every thought. Everything is mine and *stays* with me. And yet isn’t mine. I feel like a thief of memories. A peeping Tom in my own life.

Baz probably feels that I am holding him against me and stops trying to move away. Probably questioning my sanity. There is a question in his eyes. I don’t know how to answer it without kissing him so I hold still, hoping my hand releases him soon.

He touches my forehead with his palm.

“Are you ok, Snow? Maybe we should go back to the infirmary.”

He sounds concerned. Voice soft. Not angry nor mean.

And his lips are *right here. Right fucking here.* I know how it feels to kiss them and yet, it’s like it’s a borrowed memory. I want it to be mine.

Fuck. I release him and push him away with an angry grunt.

“Leave me alone, Baz!’

I sit up. I feel like crying. My eyes are stinging. “I met a creature in the woods. It gave me something and it will pass in a couple of days.” I am vague but honest. “Until then, leave me be.”

“Gave you what? Like, a disease?”

“Yea. something like that. It’s not catching. Unfortunately. It *would* make things so much easier if it were though...” I say the last part under my breath, but he hears it, I think.

He leaves me alone though.

I go into the kitchens first. The cook left today and I convinced him to let me do some cooking. He made me promise I will not destroy his kitchen, I agreed. I don’t know how boiling eggs can be dangerous. Since this is the only thing I know how to make.

I boil myself some now and try not to think about what the visions are showing.

There is a scenario in which the humdrum doesn’t kill me. If this is not a plot by Baz, then there is a chance that I survive. And go on living. And have a family. With Baz. (Of *all* People!)

I have never looked too closely at my future, because, well, because I never thought I would have one. Why bother with something you’re not meant to have. It would only hurt to want it.

As I munch on the eggs I wonder if there are other futures there, as pure potential. Other futures in which I exist.

Other futures in which Baz and I exist as a *we. As a unit.*

My heart flutters in my chest when I think about that.

We seemed really happy.

I ask myself, what would Penny do and decide she would go to the library.

Yes. The place where magickal knowledge is stored. I wish we had a version of magickal google. Normal Mages, I mean, all skilled mages can use searching spells. If *I* try to **fine tooth comb** something in the library, I might turn a shelf with books into actual combs. And I seem to have misplaced my wand. So there. No Magickal google for me.

I wonder how frequently the visions will come… At least I am almost alone in the school, and if I try hard enough to ignore Baz today, he will be gone tomorrow and I will be completely alone. Free to freak out as hard as I need to.

I might sleep in the library today, why not. Maybe some knowledge will rub off on me during sleep. It's probably already midnight. I have no way of checking without applying additional effort. Anyway, the library is more alluring than staring into Baz's grey eyes and seeing the difference in how he looks at me in this inexistent future and how he looks at me in our present reality.

No matter how hard I try to shake it off, there is an insistent yearning inside me. I want to see Baz laugh with his head thrown back. I want to see Baz happy. I want him to nibble at my ear and call me love. *I want him to stay.* I want his eyes to crinkle when I say something funny.

My heart squeezes. I don't know how true this feeling is.

All I know is that *I don't want him to leave me here alone* , yet I hate that I want that.

I wonder if this feeling is a projection of the visions? Is it a seed that is growing inside me becoming mine? Or is it something already in me that is stirring awake, shaken by the visions?

I don't know, my head spins with possible answers and even more questions.

I search for books on prophecies and future seers. I find a book on North Mythology, searching for the names the creature gave me, but there is so much information there I feel overwhelmed. I have never been good at extracting information from texts. Long texts confuse me, intimidate me. They seem to never end and words tumble together in my mind, tangling themselves and tiring me to no good end.

Penny would help. But she is not here.

I fall asleep with my face on the book about northern mythology, and the last thought in my head is about how closed and angry Baz looked when he answered my question about being straight. I am really a tactless git.

I wish I could go back to the time when I thought Baz was a heartless monster and did not care about his feelings. Now I can't unknow how it feels to be loved by him.

I can't unknow how it feels to care about his happiness.

Damnit!

***

I wake in the morning and everything starting with my neck, my back and ending with my butt hurts. Sleeping in a seated position is most definitely not a sustainable sleeping practice. My face is probably creased and wrinkled and I can even smell the stench of this monster morning breath.

There is a blinding whiteness outside and I stumble to the windows, shaking off the last flickers of sleep. I press my face into the window glass, marvelling.

Everything is white. Everywhere I look.

If I had some more strength, I would probably be pissed that winter showed up today instead of yesterday, but I am too exhausted from too much sleep and can't help but feel giddy.

Winter is here! Real winter!

I drag my feet to the kitchens and make myself some tea. I find some toast and butter (thank Merlin!) and drink tea with it. Then, while I look for something sweet on the shelves I find a stash of red wine. I take the bottle and take a swig. It's too sweet for my taste. I take another swig - can alcohol help with memories of something that didn't and might not happen?

I hope so.

The air is cool in the hallways, and everywhere else, it seems that the heating is lowered to a minimum when no one is here. So on my way out of the kitchen I take a tablecloth and wrap it around me like a shawl. It's not like anyone will see me. I feel like an empress with the shawl and the bottle of wine from which I drink from time to time. Pleasant warmth courses through my veins after every gulp I take.

I head to our room, hating every step of the stairs. Who came up with the concept of stairs? A long legged monster for sure. Someone like Baz, who probably wore their hair back, being all sleek and cool.

And why is Watford so backward in time that it doesn't have an elevator? What if a drunk student goes up the stairs and then tumbles down from where the poor bloke came and breaks his neck, which still aches from sleeping in the library?

I suffer through it stoically. After all, there are sweaters and coats in our room. And blankets. Many blankets! I hurry up. And sway a little. My shawl makes a majestic flip at the corner when I reach the top floor where the blanket room awaits.

Before opening the door, I wrap my arms around myself and try not to think about the empty room. Yea, the room has blankets. But it also doesn't have Baz.

He is surely gone already. I will be alone.

That's good.

Good. I tell myself. But don't really believe me. I am shite at lying.

I think I will just kick the door open. Jacky Chan style. Rip the band aid quickly. Every beginning of the year I live in this room alone before Baz arrives. It shouldn't be something I am not ready to do *now*.

Except now I know how it feels to lay my head on his chest. And I miss it so much it hurts physically.

I stop before the door and remember the sounds he made when we kissed (will kiss, might kiss? Stupid unclear unstable future! It messes up all my tenses!)

I bang my head on the door once and lean on the wooden surface, groaning. Maybe if I get a concussion I will be out for the remainder of this ordeal. I am mentally preparing to take another chance with self-concucting? Self-concussing? Getting myself a concussion with the help of the lovely polite door when it does something rude and swings open. Since I had all my weight - and expectations- on it I topple forward into the solid frame of Baz. I don't even look at him I know it's him. It's the smell, the shape of him, the way his breath hitches when he catches me.

My arms automatically go around his neck - how can my muscles have the memory of something I haven't yet done?

I try to stop myself from holding on to his shoulders for balance but I end up literally launching myself into a full hug.

He stills under my touch and I am happy that he at least doesn't recoil from me.

"Are you drunk, Snow?" he sounds incredulous.

I step back from him and rearrange my royal shawl in a royal fashion.

"No. Are *you* ?" I gesticulate with the bottle, which is now only half full, and a few droplets end on the carpet.

Baz looks perplexed. His pouty mouth is ready to smile but he is fighting it.

"Get in and close the door. You're letting out the heat." he sounds way more reasonable and civil than I expect him to be.

"Or maybe I am letting the cold in, huh! Haven't thought about that with your big annoying beautiful brain, now, havya?"

His eyes widen but he stays on point, closing the door after me.

"According to basic physics, it's letting the *heat out.* "

I sit on the bed, put the bottle on the floor and then gather my knees to my chest, wrapping myself tighter into the kitchen table cloth.

I probably look ridiculous. I reach for the blanket on my bed and make myself a cocoon out of it. The majestic shawl stays on.

While I am busy layering myself to keep heat in AND cold out, Baz is painfully silent.

When I am cocooned properly, so that I feel like a neckless fat caterpillar, I look up at him. He hasn't moved from the door.

"Why haven't you left yet?" I ask. It sounds like an accusation. *Please stay.* Is what I want to say. Even though the wine has definitely made me a little drunk, I am happy to report that my diction has stayed perfect and my control over what I say and don't is still working.

"Don't worry. Aunt Fiona should be here any minute now."

"When?" I demand again. I probably sound suspicious of him not leaving.

"Any minute now" he repeats like he is talking with a particularly slow child. There is this annoyed look on his face. Like he wants to say something but is holding back.

That's when his phone rings and he answers quickly exiting the room. I notice only then that he has his bag with him. I guess that is *good bye* then.

"Merry Christmas to you too, you spoiled prat!" I yell at the snapped shut door.

It is after a few minutes that I remember he didn't tell me where he hid my sword. Without my sword, I am basically a newborn-human-baby in terms of helplessness.

It feels like my head clears with adrenaline from imagining that. I emerge wobbly victorious from my cocoon and run to the door after Baz. If I hurry , I might catch him in time and kiss him. Oh wait. No. That's not what I am going to do. I am not allowed here. Now. This is a different reality. I am going to demand my sword back.

I almost reach the first floor - running fast like Flash, jumping a few stairs at a time like a Ninja butterfly - when this realization pops in my head: If I'm with Baz in this potential future, then I am not straight.

It occurred to me to ask Baz about it, but it never occurred to me to think about what it means for *me.*

My nonexistent level of self awareness shocks me as I fly down the steps. And then a vision hits. And I am no longer at Watford, slightly tipsy and jumping two stairs.

"Oh. I did not know you were gay, Simon!" The sentence seems to tumble out of the girl's mouth and she covers her mouth quickly with her hand.

Baz chuckles. He kisses my temple and removes his hand from my bum and places it on my waist.

"He is my husband. But he is not gay. A riddle, young one!" He speaks in a dramatic fashion, like he is on stage and is a 100 year old dwarf.

I roll my eyes.

“I’m pansexual.” I tell Jackie and then pull at a lock of Baz’s hair in retribution for his antics with my employees.

“Jackie, this is Basil. My husband. Basil, this is Jackie, my Sous Chef. Freshly hired. She is a prodigy in the kitchen. And she - ” I check with Jackie, but we haven’t talked about this and I am not sure I am allowed to say it. So I shut my mouth.

“Nice to meet you, Jackie. Please call me Baz the Husband. Capital H.” Baz extends his other hand, the one not attached to me and not rubbing tantalizing circles on my ribs.

Jackie chuckles.

“He’s been presenting himself like the Husband since the wedding day.” I look up at the ceiling, counting. “It’s been 3 months now.”

“So you are the one buying him the awesome socks?” Jackie inquires.

“You mean the ridiculous socks?” I say, extending my leg forward and pulling at my trouser to show the dinosaur socks, blue on green, that I am wearing.

“She means the ridiculously awesome socks, yeah.” Baz laughs and takes a bite of the strawberry muffin that I made him, which had been forgotten once we started making out. “I like you, Jackie. Good thing you’re not a waitress, with that lack of a verbal filter you remind me of Simon when he was young.”

Jackie grins. “Just, I would never have imagined Simon is queer. He dresses like such a boring basic Normal.”

I feel Baz stiffen a little at the word Normal, but his face doesn’t betray anything.

“Only at work, I swear!” I laugh it off.

“Anyways, sorry to interrupt. I forgot my phone,” she waves it to us as proof and then before leaving says, “Have a nice evening you two. Simon. Baz the Husband.” she nods at us with a mock serious face then walks away leaving a positively cackling Baz.

“You hired another mage.” Baz says finishing his muffin and discarding off the paper cup in the bin.

“No, not really. She is not a mage.” I stall. “She is, however, a vampire.”

He arches one eyebrow. I imagine how this kind of conversation would have gone explosive a few years ago. It took us years to work through Baz’s aversion of what he is. He is in a much healthier place now.

“She’s a great sous chef.”

“If you say so.” His arms sneak around me, caressing my back.

“A small demon of effectiveness in the kitchen.”

“Aha.” He kisses my cheek, then bites my cheekbone.

“From Australia. And she is a civilized vampire. She’s connected to the local community. I

checked. Good girl. She was dying of cancer and her lover turned her. Like 15 years ago..."

"Simon. Love. You don't need to explain yourself to me." He takes both my hands and squeezes them. I intertwine our fingers.

"I know. But I want to. I am so proud of you. Of how long you've come in regards to your vampirism."

"What? I am proud of you! *Look at this place! It's amazing!" he steps away from me and gestures to the kitchen, looking around with eyes shining with pleasure and pride. I agree. It is quite amazing. 30 square meters, perfectly polished, smoothly working for over 5 months now. We have a functioning program for feeding people in need and catering to 2 orphanages in the region. Healthy Slow Food for All is my baby project. And Baz has supported me all the way.*

I grin at him. Accepting the praise. A few years ago I would have squirmed uncomfortably under so much praise. Now I just beam at him.

"Yeah. I love this place."

"You know what else?"

"What?"

He grabs me by my thighs and hoists me up against him and then on the counter.

"I love how neat this is. Everything is spotless. Everything in their place. Can I get your Main Chef to come live at our place? Maybe teach my husband a few lessons on how not to be pigsty with his socks, and pants, and how to use a coaster for his tea?" He grinds against me as he says this and I wrap my legs around him, pulling him closer.

"I have *to be messy, somewhere, Baz. It's either here and get this place closed by sanitation. Or at home. And watch you make this adorable annoyed face when I spell* A place for everything, everything in its place. *"*

The laughter rumbles in his chest and my wandering hands are already unbuttoning his shirt.

He pulls back to look me in the eyes, "Why do you do this after *I see the horror fest that you regularly turn our home into?"*

I grin.

"It's tradition!" I laugh at his confused face. "I make a mess and you get annoyed and then we have angry sex. Everybody wins."

Kissing Baz when he is laughing is one of the best things in the universe. Better than butter. Better than butter melting on a scone. (Which we make the best of, by the way!)

"You know what turns me on even more?"

I bite his bare shoulder and his hips buck forward.

"What?" My voice is breathy now, I lick his lips once. So tasty.

"The knowledge that you will sterilize every surface after we're done fucking."

And then his mouth ravishes mine and I moan into the kiss. I am unbuttoning his trousers,

impatient, uncoordinated jerky movements. Finally I manage to unbuckle his belt, then without unzipping I shove my hand in his trousers and feel him.

He groans when I cup him through his pants.

His hands aren't dormant either. I am already sprawled half naked on the counter.

And yea, he is right. I will completely sterilize everything. But… After.

After.

Baz lowers himself on his knees in front of me and pulls my trousers and my pants down in one move. The hunger in his eyes makes my knees buckle. He purses his mouth in a clever pout. Merlin I will die. My mouth is watering, I want him so badly.

My mouth is full of blood. Every time I slip into a vision I completely leave this reality. With stairs and gravity. And when I return - I pay the price.

There is something hard and stony floating in blood and saliva in my mouth.

If I cracked a tooth, I swear I *will* cry.

I feel wetness on my cheeks and I realize I *am* crying already.

I am alone at Watford. Baz is gone to celebrate a white Christmas with his perfect family. I think I broke a tooth. My mouth is bloody and I think I bit off a chunk of my tongue - good thing that won't make me a worse spell caster, because literally nothing short of death can make me so. I have no idea where I put my wand. My sword is hidden in some obscure place by my nemesis potential future husband.

If the humdrum decides to attack now, I will happily let him off me - no casualties other than the worst Chosen One in the history of chosen ones.

I shall stay here, in this puddle of self pity until I am off-ed by the Insidious Humdrum.

I actually think it is the Humdrum when I see something in my peripheral eyes. I know I am still tipsy when my hand automatically goes to my thigh and I try to summon my sword. Stupid. And drunk.

But then I don't feel the usual dryness of the air.

The shape comes into focus.

I leap to my feet: It's the creature! She is shimmering blue, but if she was peaceful and still in the Woods and here she is restless, she paces in front of me, a cloud of blue mist covering her feet, paws, claws?

"You came back! Whath thith you tho thoo me? Ow, my thong!" Yes definitely bit a chunk of my tongue. I am lisping horribly. *Take it back! Take all of it back!* I yell in my mind, knowing she can hear me.

"Silence, boy," she hisses in my head and it makes all my nerve endings flare.

“Your magic is strange!” she murmurs. “Yours and not yours. Borrowed and stolen and weaved with your own. So strange. I have never studied anything like it… Why do you steal it? And how?” She stops abruptly in front of me. Her eyes seem to finally focus on me and she moves back from me.

“You should be in your future now. What are you doing here?”

Chapter End Notes

Two memories here))
AWTWB is here. I must be strong and not read it until I finish this story. gahhh!!

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

> “Because I am pathetic, Baz. Because I thought you left and took my sword with you. Because I don't know where my wand is and I don’t really care, and I know I SHOULD care and that makes me feel guilty and ashamed. And because my tooth was broken and everything hurt. Some of it still hurts. And because I probably would never get this love filled future because it seems impossible. And because I was cold and I was hungry.
> I am hungry.”
>
> “You cried because I left?” his voice is barely above a whisper. His expression guarded.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

BAZ

He was slurring words so hard I could barely understand him. I have never seen drunk Simon Snow and if it weren’t for the utter oddity of the day, I would be enjoying it more. He was wearing a table cloth, for fuck’s sake. If I hadn’t been distracted I would have mocked him mercilessly. But I have never seen Snow in colour. Strawberry pink makes his eye color pop. There. I said it. I only get to see Snow in school uniform. Which is a tasteless piece of creation that he seems to adore.

Under usual circumstances, when encountering a drunk Snow in the wild, I would probe with some questions to get some of his secrets out. Get some new material for poking fun at him later, dragging him into arguments and glaring contests… You know, the usual stuff in love people (vampires) do to the object of their affection.

But I got thoroughly distracted by the gay question. Who asks something like that?

And… He kept looking at me differently. As if he was seeing me for the first time and didn’t know he was supposed to hate me. It made me uncomfortable to be studied like this. It made me uncomfortable to not have his hatred to bounce off. It felt like by disarming himself he disarmed me.

So when Fiona called, I took it as a *saved by the bell* moment and left the room before I changed my mind and stayed with him. Disarmed. With no hatred between us.

I assumed he would eventually go to the bathroom and find his damned sword behind the shower curtain. I just hope he will not cut himself accidentally while stepping in the shower.

Fuck. He will totally cut himself and bleed to death in the bathroom. Maybe I should go back. Or not. No. Not going back. I already have my bag.

In a way, I will be able to take credit for that. Cunning plan, boyo! You’re a real Pitch! Fiona would say and I would go weep in my room.

On the other end, Fiona says the snow fall has made getting to Watford by car quite a challenge. She says the roads could be manageable in a couple of days, but right now the infrastructure is fucked. She assures me she will get me home by Christmas and I realize I don't really give a fuck about being home by Christmas.

She asks if I am ok, and I tell her *sure. Maybe it's for the better. This way, I get more time to do some sneaking around and maybe sabotage something in the Mage's office* . She says I can take all the time I want and she can come pick me up on Christmas Eve. (My family's obsession with war stuff is getting on my nerves sometimes.) She hangs up quickly after that, probably to not give me a chance to change my mind.

When the call is over I head back to our room. I try to feel annoyed, but instead I feel giddy at the prospect of at least 4 days with Snow in a practically empty dorm. Something's gotta give.

I practically jog back when I turn a corner to the stairs and see Snow sitting on the floor, hugging his knees like a kid lost in a mall. He is not wearing shoes, and he wiggles his toes in those ridiculously cute socks that Bunce gave him. His head is resting on his knees and his shoulders are trembling. Fuck. He is crying. My heart wines.

How do I comfort him? What is it that *I* can give and hope for it to be received?

I would take out my heart and give it to him if it made his pain stop. But he would probably kick it in the gutter.

What makes Simon Snow cry?

And then he raises his head and I see the blood, smeared around his mouth. I smell it.

"What the fuck happened?" I march towards him, taking long strides. Anger sipping through my every move.

"I fell." he says. He says it simply, like you'd say - it's Tuesday today.

He wiggles his toes again. He must be cold. The stupid fool.

"You fell? Into someone's jugular? How could you fall so hard? Did you forget you have hands to protect your face?" I don't know why I can't keep the emotion out of my voice.

"Shuth up!" Oh he has a lisp. He sounds similar to when I try to speak with my fangs out.

I take out my wand and start throwing healing spells on him. I fed nicely yesterday, but still. I can't be looking at Snow like at a buffet. I want him in too many ways as it is.

"You owe me so hard, Snow." I let him know and offer him my hand. I remember the last time I did it and how he recoiled and looked horrified, but it's too late to take it back and… he spares me the humiliation, accepting my help.

I pull at my hand once he is up and he lets go only after the second tug. He stares at his toes. I stare at his curly head.

"May I hug you?" he asks quietly and I don't know anymore what's up and down in this world, because what the fuck is happening. I know one thing for sure. There is no way in hell I am saying no to this crying of a mess Snow that needs a hug. I might be the least huggable thing in a mile

radius, but I am also the only huggable thing in a mile radius.

So I nod.

And he slowly, carefully, as if afraid to not scare me, puts his arms around my waist, slipping them underneath my coat. His palms end up in the middle of my shoulder blades. He rests his head on my chest.

My chin fits perfectly on the top of his head and for a second I don't know what to do with my free hand (one is busy holding my bag) I finally settle on patting his back. But he doesn't let go at once and the patting feels ridiculous after a while, so I simply hug him back, holding him close. I have never hugged or been hugged by anyone for so long. I had no idea hugging could be a whole thing. In itself.

Then I let the bag drop and add a second arm to the hug. Yeah. It feels oddly right.

"What happened, Simon?" I ask softly in his hair.

He hugs me tighter and I know he is still crying because of the way he is breathing.

"Now, now. I know the Cook keeps some scones in the refrigerator. Let's get some carbs and butter in you, what do you say?"

I feel his nod in my chest.

"Are you ready to let go now?"

He shakes his head exhaling in my chest. The gust of hot air reaches through the fabric of my shirt and gets to my skin. The place warms. Something shifts inside me. Relaxes. Falls into place.

I exhale the tension and a few locks of his hair move caught in the gust of air. I close my eyes.

"Let me know when you are ready, love." I murmur and my eyes flow open. Oh, fuck, fuck, fuck. I hope he is too tired/drunk/sad to notice the word I used.

Instead of freaking out at me he starts crying harder. So I guess I am safe. He is too sad-drunk to notice.

**

We go to the kitchen and all the way he holds onto the sleeve of my coat. Like a lost puppy.

It is weirding me out. It's like, it's like he wants to hold hands but instead goes for this as an alternative. I dare not test this theory.

I sit him on a chair at the table and then get out a hoodie from my bag and get him to put it on. It is of a vivid forest green and it looks wickedly good on him. He hides his hands in the sleeves, pulls his feet off the ground and onto the chair then proceeds to ruin my hoodie by stretching it over his knees.

I roll my eyes at the barbarian but he doesn't really take notice. His eyes are looking everywhere except me.

I make us both hot tea and magick the scones hot for Snow, adding the butter on top as I know he likes it.

He eats the first one without a word. I drink my tea in silence. I am determined to not be the one to break it. He *owes* me at least some words, explanations. *At least* for stretching my sweater and looking like a gorgeous Simon-headed frog, sipping tea and munching on scones with a pensive frown on his forehead.

After he finishes eating he heaves a sigh.

“Can I have some more tea?” he asks. His toes wiggle in his socks. They are very Christmassy socks. The only actively Christmassy thing in Watford at the moment.

I pour him more tea.

“Can you make it hotter, please?”

“For fuck’s sake, Snow!” I snap. He startles and spills some on the table. I immediately regret my outburst. I generally don’t *do* outbursts. I do calculated communication, aggressive smart banter, posh bullying...not exclaiming in exasperation.

I rake my hair a few times, until I feel like I am back to a more or less contained state.

“Sorry.” he mumbles.

“Don’t apologize, you infuriating nucklehead! Explain with words strung in coherent sentences, will you?”

SIMON

Baz seems on the verge of an angry fit. It is only fair that I explain, after all.

So I start with meeting the creature in the Woods. I briefly summarize our conversation and what I agreed to.

“And remind me, what *were* you doing in the woods?”

“Spying on you,” I admit defeatedly. Because what’s the point. He knows. I know. He knows that I know that he knows. It’s a whole *know* ception. (Yea, I’ve seen the movie Inception.)

“Correction, *trying* to spy!” he seems pissed and smug at the same time. Such a feat.

“Yes. Trying and failing miserably. Apparently, Baz, I suck at everything. Including following you. Anyways. Back to the damn story.

When I had that...erm, episode at the edge of the campus, that’s when I had my first vision. Except it wasn’t a vision. I expected I would be viewing a movie of my life in a potential future. Like front row seats. Instead I got to be in the main role. Everything that happens there I *feel* . And apparently I stop functioning in this body when my mmm mind, or whatever, my consciousness leaves for another episode of Netflix future life.”

“What did you see in there that freaked you out so spectacularly?” He seems genuinely curious. If only he knew.

There it is, I tell myself, the moment when I tell Baz the truth. Except I don’t let it be this moment.

“I can’t tell you. I won’t. I mean... It doesn’t matter. What matters is that, apparently, I need to lie

in bed just in case a vision hits. Because otherwise - I crack a tooth when flying off the stairs."

"And we can't have that now, can we? Miracle Boy without his blinding smile will look bad in the books of history!"

"Don't be a mean poo, Baz." I beg.

He sighs and his face softens. "Why were you crying just now? Because of the future? Is it so horrible?"

"No, it's not horrible." I tell him earnestly. "It's the best! It's family and friendship and… love." I swallow and evade his gaze. I am afraid of what he might see there. Yearning. Love. Want. Sadness.

I remember the last vision and what he was about to do to me and how now I will remain with this open want, with this consuming unspent desire.

"Then why?" he insists stubbornly, his chin jutting forward a tiny fraction.

"Because I am pathetic, Baz. Because I thought you left and took my sword with you. Because I don't know where my wand is and I don't really care, and I know I SHOULD care and that makes me feel guilty and ashamed. And because my tooth was broken and everything hurt. Some of it still hurts. And because I probably would never get this love filled future because it seems impossible. And because I was cold and I was hungry. I am hungry."

"You cried because I left?" his voice is barely above a whisper. His expression guarded.

"Yeah." I admit. And I could add *and took my sword with you,* to cover my tracks, to make my words less significant . But I don't. Because I am a reckless wreck, and I want him to know that him leaving affects me. I have a feeling it will always affect me from now on.

"Also because of what the creature said when she returned." I bite the inside of my cheek.

"She returned?"

"Yeah, while I was wallowing in self pity like a ninny."

He motions for me to continue, agreeing royally with my self assessment.

"She said the magic in me is, well, is not fully mine. She said I am stealing, and borrowing from left and right. She wanted to know how I do it. She wanted to know why I do it. She didn't believe me when I said I did not know anything about what she was talking about. And then.." I heave a heavy sigh. Baz is leaning forward on his elbows, his knees are practically touching mine. I move my chair forward and now our knees are touching. He doesn't move away. (I take courage from this small contact)

"And then she said: *You come from a powerful magickal line, but that is not where your magic comes from.* She kept circling me, like a dog about to attack. She was looking through me, into me."

He reaches for my hand and squeezes it. I find so much comfort in his touch that I shut my eyes to keep the tears in. Enough tears for today. The implications of "You come from a powerful magickal line" are surely not lost on Baz. It means I am the only magickal unwanted child. My parents saw something in me so utterly wrong, so utterly broken and unfixable and that made me ultimately unlovable. Mages don't abandon their kids. Magic is too precious. If someone loses

their parents, there is always someone to take them in. No one throws them out in the Normals' world. Except someone abandoned me alright.

"What else did she say?" he prompts and I open my eyes to his steady grey gaze. He looks like *my* Baz right now. So I go on, lulled into a sense of safety. (I guess flies feel the same about the spider's web)

"She said whenever I steal magic for my use I hurt *it* . It, as in, magic itself. But Baz, I don't… I swear I have no idea what she is talking about!" It is extremely important he knows this. I may be a horrible Chosen one, the worst in the history, but I am not a thief of Magic. The Humdrum is!

"She said that it's because of my weird magic, that instead of immersing and seeing myself fully in the future, I am actually experiencing it in bits. She says this might go on indefinitely, until all that I had to see will be seen."

"So she fucked up her spell because she didn't take into account your specificity and you are paying the price?" he seems angry *for* me. He is usually angry *at* me.

"There was no spell, Baz," I lean towards him, pulled by the intensity in his eyes. "The magic she used, she wielded it differently, not through words. She must be an olden creature."

"Can you remember the names of her parents? We need more info on this witch." Baz is all business. It gives me comfort, the way he takes control. It feels like something Penny would do.

"Yea. Frigga and Vör." I say.

He seems impressed by that. And I feel like I need to explain, "I went searching for info in the library yesterday."

"Yea, I saw you drooling on an ancient text." he sips on his tea like he didn't just admit to seeking me out yesterday.

"What?" he looks at me defiantly. "I had to check if you were alive. You were a total mess. Are still."

I sniffle once. Could it be that *this* Baz also cares? Even a little? He cares enough to search for me in the middle of the night. I will take that.

We go to the library together. There is plenty of room, but we walk closely. Our elbows touch. I can hear his breathing, he probably can hear my heart beat. I wish I could hold his hand. I wish I could tuck myself underneath his arm and hold on to him. I wish I could stop wishing impossible things.

Everywhere we go Christmas lights sparkle and then die down as we pass them, disappearing into the walls when we are far enough away. The decorations are magicked to activate when someone is around. As the pupils left the school for Christmas, most decorations went dormant till the next year. There are some random mistletoes here and there, and some students made toys or Father Christmas-es, which aren't magicked for that. But other than that, there is nothing to suggest Christmas is coming. I look at my feet as we walk, not wanting to face-plant - enough humiliation in front of Baz today.

I notice there is a Christmas print on my socks and think of Penny. She probably is having eggnog with her family. Her mom didn't want me there because of tensions with the Mage.

Penny said she would wing it, that I should come, but I didn't want to make any more trouble. That's what Agatha said, *You probably don't want to make any more trouble, so you can spend the Christmas elsewhere.*

This reminds me! I stop Baz by the shoulder. (Any excuse to touch him, really. I'm pathetic.)

"Baz! Your aunt was supposed to pick you up! What happened?"

"Snow."

"What? You said it yourself, that you're leaving today. It's today already! You had your bag and everything. I saw it."

"I mean - the snow happened. All roads leading to Watford are fucked."

"Oh."

He smiles a crooked smile.

"Baz. What did you do with my sword?"

"Why, do you feel threatened?"

"I feel naked."

"Oh."

"Yeah. It's like I am missing a member."

"I got it, Snow." He huffs annoyed. "Your sword is in the room. In the bathroom. Behind the shower curtain."

"Oh. I wouldn't have found it until the day you were supposed to return, to be honest."

He snorts an inelegant laughter through his nose.

"You are such a pig!"

"Actually, Penny says pigs are actually very clean animals when given the chance. Language acts ruthlessly against some species. I don't think she meant only animal species."

His eyebrows are raised in expectation.

I sigh. "Like all the sayings we have about Pixies."

"And Vampires." I add when I gather some courage. He doesn't comment but puts a little more distance between us as we walk.

It turns out the creature's parents' names were indeed Frigg and Vör - my notes say as much. Except both were female deities, both related to wisdom and knowledge and cleverness - the books say as much.

There's a lot about Frigg - she was Odin's wife apparently. Could the creature be wrong? Maybe she is an orphan, like me, a leftling, and has grandeur illusions. (Like me when I was a kid)

Baz is doing reading in actual books while I search the Normal's internet for these two. There is no mention of them having a daughter or even being somehow associated with one another. Then I find an article about how Vör was Odin's aunt. Is this considered incest? I notice that in this case Vor is written without the two dots but I don't know if that changes anything. In another source I find that Vör (this time with the two dots) - was Frigg's handmaiden. My brain breaks a little from too much searching and I look up to check on Baz. My feet are resting on the same chair he is sitting in, I don't have shoes on so the floor makes me cold very fast. He doesn't seem to mind my socked feet near his perfect trousers. I am tempted to touch my toe to his leg. But I resist heroically.

I remember the feel of the material underneath my hands when I was undressing him in the vision. I swallow, blush furiously and look away while adjusting my own trousers to conceal any accidental responses.

"Any results?" I ask a little too loudly. Baz's head snaps up.

"SHHHH we're in the library," he reprimands and it takes me too long to realize he is joking. I smile tentatively at him. If we were so in love we got married in this potential future, then surely, surely we can be at least friendly in this reality's present.

"There is one mention of the two together, and it was when Frigg executed Vör for treason. It doesn't mention a daughter. However, I find it very suspicious that it says here basically that women who lost their men in battle could be made with child by the help of Frigg. If Frigg and Vör were having some sort of romantic relationship, it is possible she helped Vör give birth and -"

He stops abruptly and I look up from his phone, where I have been staring while he was talking (he gave it to me to do research. Because mine is so old it simply died a few days ago.) He is glaring at me. And it takes me a second to realize why.

"Hand me the phone, Snow." he holds his hand palm up, extended to me.

I try to close the tabs I am on, but he makes a move for it - so fast! - and takes it out of my hand.

"May I remind you that *this situation of yours* is really none of my business. I could be spending this time reading something I am actually interested in, not do all the work here while you're ignoring..." he peers at the screen and reads my google search: "Do the dots on O have a name?"

I don't know what I am supposed to say.

"You google like a granny and yes they're called umlaut, you ignoramus." he rolls his eyes to the heavens, as if in prayer. If he had his wand out I might think he is casting something on me.

"So, you'd rather read the Ethics book now than help me?" I say lamely, a little humiliated and kind of hurt. I need to remind myself that the Baz in front of me is not the same Baz that told me I could wrap the whole house in ugly squares and circles if it made me happy. But I am afraid I can't distinguish between them anymore. They have the same eyes. They smell the same. This one is more greyish than *my* Baz, but still the same angles, the same curved pouty mouth.

"The ethics book!" I jump up, nearly kicking him in the face while removing my feet from his chair.

"It is about foretelling, right? The ethics book. Maybe it has some mentions of this creature?"

Baz gets up with surprise written on his face.

“That- is actually not a half bad idea, Snow. Let’s go. I am freezing anyway.”

“Do you want your hoodie back? I think I stretched it a little bit.”

He makes a disgusted face and says, “ Keep it forever, Snow. It wears the imprints of your knees and it looks like there’s a pair of invisible tits there now.”

BAZ

It says ***property of Baz Pitch*** on the hoodie’s tag. I grin widely when Snow can’t see me. He’s basically wearing something that says he’s mine. I like it a lot.

SIMON

I am surrounded by the scent of cedar and I am loving it. It feels like being home. I am never washing this hoodie! My feet are getting cold again so I start running up the stairs. I felt so forlorn crying at the base of the stairs and now as I run up I have hope - Baz is here. Baz stayed. Baz will help. We can figure this out together. I barely hear him behind me but he reaches me right at the top. He is probably super silent because he is a vampire.

“Snow, you’re shimmering blue! Your hands!”

I look down at my hands, see the bluish tint that goes around them and then they (the hands) disappear.

My head is resting on Baz’s shoulder. I have headphones, listening to the audio version of The Illiad (Achilles was totally gay for Patrocles). Baz is reading a book called The neuro-psychology of shame. A study in speciesism and stigma. *His therapist Dr. R. Neiggard recommended it. Baz is still struggling with his identity as a vampire and with properly drinking for optimal health. But him reading this book - this is a good sign.*

Dr. R. Neiggard deserves a thank-you cake.

It turns out there are audio books for cooking handbooks, and since I am at the desserts chapter, I might as well extend my feedback group farther than Baz, Pen, Shep and occasionally the neighbor or/and Agatha.

Anyway, I am always amazed at how awesome his (Baz’s) brain is. A while ago,(via the spirit of observation of my eternal friend Penny and my eternal love Baz,) I *figured out that listening to information is better for me than reading it. Since then I have been reading lots of stuff that I missed during school. It has been a fun ride.*

Baz’s free hand is playing with my curls and sometimes it caresses the slope of my neck and then goes to my shoulder and then back up. It spreads pleasant warmth in me.

We read like this for a while. It is around 9pm when there is an email ping on Baz’s phone. He checks it out and his face lights up.

“Simon! I… I got the job.”

He looks incredulous.

"It's still unofficial, of course. Many procedures to follow. But. Mitali has written. She recommended my candidature. Fuck. I got the job!"

I hug him tightly, kiss his chin and then his lips.

"Of course you got the job! What is it that you always tell me…." I pretend to try and remember.

"Ah, yes. Don't be daft, love!

He chuckles menacingly.

"You're gonna pay for that, Snow!"

"Pitch-Snow, please"

"Bitch, please, I know!"

We laugh like teenagers at that. My cheeks hurt with so much laughter. We shush each other until the fits of laughter die off.

"We need to celebrate!" I declare.

"Not until it's official," he pulls me back in bed. I resist.

"But you're you. *The job is yours." I take his face in my hands and kiss him stupid. "No one could be a better Watford Headmaster. Your Mom practically invented the job. AND you practically single handedly defeated the Humdrum. You're a legend!"*

Baz snickers. "That's a stretch, love."

"Well, not single handedly. One hand was in mine so it's fair to say we did it together."

"We're both legends." he agrees and leaps off the bed, tucking me under his arm. "And we're both extremely good looking so we have that *going for us as well." He winks this ridiculously theatrical wink and I burst into laughter again.*

We drink champagne sitting on the balcony. There are stars visible. Baz shows me constellations and tells me the stories behind their names. I get excited when I recognize some from the Illiad.

Then, when the champagne bottle is empty, we watch for falling stars. I wish for more falling stars, mainly because, really, what wishes could I have? Baz is here. Everything else is achievable without wishing on falling stars.

We lie embraced in our bed and tell each other stupid nonsense about how much we love each other, and how our lives are going to change and how much has been changing and how it is a good thing. Then naturally I get hungry and we get a bite. We eat pizza and drink hot cocoa. I get the great idea to call Penny because she's in America and her time is all wrong. So it is day there. She answers and immediately congratulates Baz. Of course she knows. Her Mum probably told her first.

After Penny hangs up, we talk all night and by the end of it, we've somehow reached the conclusion we want to adopt a baby.

I am still on the stairs. But I am comfortable. I am half lying in Baz's arms. My butt is on the stair

and my back is resting on his chest, I can feel the weight of his head resting on mine. He has his arms around me, steadying me. His lean thighs are framing mine on both sides. I am surrounded by the smell and feeling of home. I pretend to be in the vision a little longer, just to enjoy the feeling. Then I remember he is a vampire and can hear my heart beat speeding up when I wake up.

“Baz?”

“Hmm?”

“We need to make a List of what we know and don’t know. That's what we always do with Penny..”

“Ok” he replies but doesn’t move. Neither do I.

“Baz?”

“Mmm?” he hums.

“Thank you for not letting me break my neck on the stairs.”

“Yeah, I don’t like it when you fall, if I am not the one pushing you.”

“Harhar,” I deadpan.

I can feel his chest shaking underneath my back. He is laughing silently.

“Baz?”

“Mhm?”

“Nothing.”

I can’t tell him how we’re married, how I am no longer just Snow, that I am Pitch-Snow... how we’re adopting a kid, how he’s becoming the Watford Headmaster and how he somehow helped in defeating the Humdrum.

Not on the stairs when he can push me down so easily.

“Baz.”

“Hmmm?”

I like the way his throat vibrates when he hums. I like it so much. In the safety of his arms, in the warmth of his hoodie. I don’t want to leave, but I am not sure how long his patience will hold.

“Could you sing amazing Grace to summon my wand? I can’t remember where I put it.”

“You’ll owe me.”

“Yea, sure. What?”

“I don’t know. I’ll think about it. Now come on, we’ve got work!”

He nudges me and I guess it’s time.

Chapter End Notes

I remember in Fangirl, when Cathy was complaining that sometimes she can't make Baz and Simon do anything but talk. This "chapter" is like that))

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

My two realities are colliding and Baz is the gravitational centre of it all.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

SIMON

It turns out my wand was in the infirmary, which is now empty, like the entirety of Watford. Baz and I are two ghosts, roaming around in a flickering Christmas setting. Somehow, Christmas is a ghost at Watford too.

“How can you go around without knowing where your wand is? Not having it on you?” Baz uses his judgy voice on me. I don’t appreciate it, so I make a face at him.

“The same way you go around not having a sword on you.”

“That’s different. You’re a mage. What good are you without a wand?”

“Slightly less good than when I wield one. You’ve seen me try to cast! Don’t make me take your role in insulting my own magickal skills. I just. I don’t *think* about this wand when it’s missing. I only think that I *should* think about it. The Mage’s sword - it is essential to me.”

“That’s how you should feel about your wand.”

“Shove your *should* s in your arse, Baz. You’re not the fucking Mage. You don’t get to asshole-parent me.” I don’t know why it bugs me so much. Baz is not even insulting me, he is not teasing. He is being earnest.

(I think.)

I guess... I expect *earnest* Baz to also be *loving* Baz from the potential Future. Not a poor copy of the Mage.

He clears his throat, clearly uncomfortable with being compared to the Mage. “Let me reformulate that: That’s how I feel about my wand. Like it is essential to me.”

I stop in my tracks. Baz being nice is like snow falling in December when no one expects it - a wonder.

While I marvel at what little kindness takes to make me salivate over him, Baz casts **See what I mean** and makes two columns:

What we know and *what we don’t know.*

He looks at me expectantly.

I flop on the floor and get my knees under his hoodie. Then I drag the tablecloth from my bed and wrap it around me. There. I am an empress queen of dwarves. I am majestic. I can work from here.

I decide to tell him only bits of information - I still am not ready to be ridiculed by him if I tell him he's my husband. And I am his. The primitive shape of that sentence makes something inside me stir. Growl.

"Let's start with what we know, and Baz, erm, remember the Anathema, ok?"

He immediately looks guarded. "Proceed." he sounds like a magnanimous king.

"The things I know from this potential future is that you are a vampire."

He makes a murder face at me:

"Snow, I swear to Crowley, if you are making all this shit up just to catch me at admitting I am a vampire I will break your neck and feed you to the merwolves."

"Baz, I don't need you to admit it. I *know*. Ok? Just… ok?" I feel like stomping my foot and shaking him a little. "It's wicked hot, but not very *relevant* right now." Before he comments on what spilled from my mouth right now, I add another item to distract him from my slip:

"You help defeat the humdrum. Like play a crucial role. That I also know."

He stops writing.

"Yeah right. And also you're a fairy."

"No, but I am pansexual" I bite the inside of my lip. It feels so good, to rip pieces of the inside of my mouth, like controlled safe self destruction. "Also. I don't know what that is, I need to research it so I guess we can add this in both columns. Also, we don't know how you help defeat the humdrum. That would be helpful to know."

He swallows loudly.

"What else?"

"Well, dunno how relevant it is, but we held hands when we defeated it, so maybe it's some sort of collective spell? I don't know." He writes *collective spell?*

"I also know that the Mage stops being the Headmaster."

"Yea, does your precious mentor become president of the world?"

"I don't know. All I know is that in the vision, I just felt sad and guilty and naturally I steered clear of those feelings and thoughts about him. In the vision, you just received the unofficial news that you got the job of Headmaster from Penny's mum… weird. Anyway, I was too happy to dare ruin the moment with other thoughts."

He snorts so loud he chokes.

He drops on his bed. Forearm hiding his face while he laughs.

“Yea ok. Now I need *you* to tell me what drugs you’ve been taking.”

“None. I am telling you, this is the truth.”

He sits up and glares at me through narrowed eyes.

“And if I cast a truth spell on you, you’ll be saying the same things?” He crosses his arms and tips his chin at me. His grey eyes are steel and smoke.

“Yea, but I would rather you didn’t.”

“Why not? Don’t want to have your pants on fire?”

“Well, yes. I mean, no. I wouldn’t want my pants on fire because *you* might catch fire, as you and I both know, Basil - you are highly flammable.”

He only huffs at this. I feel like visiting slash living these visions has somehow made a crack in the vessel in my mind where words are stored. Now they are leaking. I like the way he cocks his head when he listens to me. I never noticed that before. But then again, I don't think I ever talked to him with the single goal of being understood. I throw my hands in the air, “Alas, no, that’s not the reason, my pants wouldn’t go up on fire.”

“Did you just use *Alas,* Snow? Are your visions taking place in the 1850s?”

I ignore him and go on. “I would rather not cast a truth spell, Baz, because there are some things I would rather wait before telling you.”

His raised eyebrows are all the commentary I get. There is mistrust there, in his eyes. Like he doesn’t know *how* to believe me. I swallow back the sting from that. *Not my Baz. Not this Baz.* I tell myself, but it doesn’t work. It still hurts. So I look away from it, I look at the walls and think how I would drape them in stupid circles and squares.

“ *And* ,” I keep on oversharing, leaking words like I leak magic before going off. “because you will probably make horrible, terrible fun of me. And honestly, I really, really cannot take that. Not from you. Not now.”

“What do you mean not from me?” His voice is soft and I turn to face him. I can’t read his expression, but the mistrust has faded. “Who else has been ridiculing you?” He gives me a crooked smile. “That’s my job! I signed a contract and all.”

I hide my face in my hands, I feel tears threatening to come again. He is backtracking, making light - giving me an olive branch. Self-deprecating Baz. I haven’t met him until now.

How do I navigate this terrain with him? If when he’s being mean it hurts and when he’s not it makes me tear up? What is happening. Everything inside me feels like a tangled mess I have no idea how to untangle.

My two realities are colliding and Baz is the gravitational centre of it all.

He lets me have my freak-out moment in peace. And only when I finally peek at him from between

my fingers does he speak.

“Ok, Snow. There’s more stuff we know.” He strides dramatically to the list in the air. “We also know you shimmer blue before being sucked into a vision. We know you’ve got *mixed* magic, except we don’t know what that means exactly. We know your parents are/were mages. Except we don’t know who they were/are.

We do know they are/were Powerful.

We also know the creature’s parents’ names, so we just need to find her name and do some more research.”

He is very busy filling in the lists.

I don’t know why my mind can’t concentrate on what is happening now. This was my idea, after all. What we’re doing is relevant now. But the vision keeps flashing in front of me whenever I blink.

“I also own a restaurant at some point.” I don’t know why I say that. It just slips.

“Yea?” He grins. It is such an unexpected reaction that I panic for a second thinking I am back in the visions. Like he seems impressed *for* me. Not of me, but for me.

“Is it called Butter? Or Simon's buttered scones? Or Butter & Scones?” he keeps hurling titles at me until I laugh aloud.

“Nah. It’s PS Food bites.” *P.S. - Pitch Snow.*

“That’s a silly enough name.” He seems entertained by the idea so I give some more details. “And I am the main cook, although I think I am planning on stepping back from that. Too much hustle. And I just hired a sous chef who’s a vampire like you, and you don’t freak out about it and we don’t try to stake her. And apparently there is a community of vampires with whom we communicate and they screen the new vampires in the city...”

“Who’s we?”

“Me and my partner.” I stammer the last word. Fuck. The crack in the vessel of words just gets bigger and bigger. Strings of sentences pour out and in front of Baz - offering after offering on the altar of his interest and attention.

“Partner? Business partner?”

“Mmm, yes. Well. no. Life partner. ok listen. Enough about this. The restaurant business is irrelevant.”

But he doesn’t relent.

“Where is this place located?”

“Dunno, Baz, dial it down, yeah? In London I guess.”

“It is not irrelevant for me, you vexing numpty! If it is in London it means I can...” he stops himself and then decides to go on, “... I can actually try to find this vampire community and learn about it.” then he falters. Again, a glint of mistrust that slays. “I mean, for academic research. For vengeance - they killed my Mum.”

“Is this how I sound most of the time? Merlin that must be hilarious, listening to me fumble around for words and explanations.”

I try to lighten the mood a little, to show him that it is ok. That I know and that it is ok, nonetheless. So I give him details:

“The girl’s name was Jackie. She was from Australia. Vivid pink hair. Almost violet eyes. Had your sense of humour - ”

“What role do I play in that future of yours, Snow? I keep popping up awfully often in these stories.” he interrupts. There is an intensity in his gaze that I cannot bear so I look away.

“Doesn’t matter. Well, I mean. It does.” I don’t know why I can’t make myself distort the truth a little. It matters, but not now, ok? I’ll tell you later, do you want to know all the details about this Jacie vampire girl so that when you go home maybe you can try to find her?”

His jaw goes slack, “Do you think that’s possible?”

“Well she should be turned somewhere around this time. I can’t say for sure, but in the visions with her we were in our early thirties.” Fucking mouth and fucking broken filter.

“We?”

“ Yea like, people that are now my age. peers.”

“Snow. What if I promise I won’t make fun of you. And won’t get murdery with you either. Will you tell me what you keep postponing for later?”

It is hard for me to remember that I must stay suspicious of him. That I must remain vigilant. What happens in a potential future does not guarantee a safe past - meaning a safe present. He might set me on fire still. Or push me off the stairs. Feed me to a chimera. Even as I think the thoughts I know they’re bollocks. The train for that kind of thinking has long gone, probably with the moment in which he got on his knees and unbuckled my belt in the vision.

“Eventually yeah. I will tell you. I swear. But not right now, ok?”

He nods and I am so relieved that he doesn’t push this, I could kiss him.

Baz adds some more items on the what We know list. I tell him that the visions are triggered by words or phrases or images. They are otherwise random. He writes some more: *They last from 5 to 10 minutes in this reality/present.*

The most I have been in there in the potential future was 1 night. A sweet warmth swirls in the center of my chest when I remember that night. We talked and talked and kissed and ate and drank… and simply were. A reminder that we are beings not doings. Both of us.

We start working at *what we don’t know* and Baz scans the book for any mention of the Ethereal's parents. He gets none. It makes sense none of them had foretelling abilities.

Then he searches for Norse mythology and gets to an interesting passage.

“From an utilitarian point of view the Northern precognition is dedicated to acquiring knowledge, especially by the followers of Freya. These beings called Ethereals for their immaterial form can

spend eons suspended in between time lines and study the causes and effects of things. They often have no qualms when it comes to using or discarding of the creatures they use for their studies, because, in the end, all is done in the name of acquiring knowledge, therefore they are rendered of the highest use."

The book is in Italian so he gives me a rough translation.

"I did not know you speak Italian."

"Not knowing is your area of expertise, Snow."

"Freya is Frigg from what I know." Baz adds when I do not retaliate. He seems surprised and satisfied by it. He wears a tight little smile. "If your creature is immaterial, it means it can't be hashed at with your sword. It means we'll have to use magic against it. Worse case scenario you go atomic on her head."

"I don't want to go off. I might take half of Watford with me." *And you. I can't risk* you.

"That's a last resort obviously. I will research some more spells that I can cast on ethereals." He stands up. "I'll be in the library. I will take pictures of the books that allow it and hopefully I can magick the others that we need out of the library. I might have a spell already, but I am not sure… hm…" he refocuses on me. "Don't go anywhere, ok. Don't go in the bathroom, don't take a shower - you'll be impaled on your sword. And no stairs." he frowns at me. "I don't want to come back and have to deal with your broken neck. Disposing of your body shouldn't be on my list of chores unless I am the one that does you in. clear?"

"Or I can just have my hands in sight and when I see the shimmering blue I can sit down."

"Well. This is actually not a bad idea."

"Good even?"

"Perhaps. But I don't trust you to be observant enough. You are not the most self aware person-" I start protesting but he holds up a hand to stop me.

"Snow. You had to visit your potential future to realize you are not straight."

"Point taken."

"So no stairs, no shower."

I nod.

"I'll be good."

He looks at me once more, to make sure I stay put.

"Baz!" I call before he exits. "Pass by the kitchen and bring something to eat."

He groans theatrically and mutters about stomachs being black holes, but I know he will bring something.

When he is out I go to the shower and make sure to keep one hand in front of me. It looks as if I'm either checking my newly painted nails or can't see properly and making sure not to hit a wall.

I find my sword and fit it in my hip, making it invisible.

I sigh contently. I never get this feeling with my wand.

I contemplate taking a shower or not, but I really do not want Baz to return while I am clearly breaking his mandate.

I go in the room and try to think what to do with myself.

I'd like to do something productive, useful, to come to a conclusion or get hit in the head with an epiphany. All I end up doing is sit on Baz's bed, with my knees tucked under his hoodie and inhaling his scent and staring at the little hole that already popped on my socks.

Just as I start drifting off to sleep, the Ethereal makes an appearance.

She is floating in her blue misty cloud of snowflake insects, or whatever it is that the blue mist thing is.

"You leave holes in the fabric." She informs me. There is a little triumphant accusation in her voice. I look at the hole in the fabric of the sock. *Huh?*

" I need to study it in action. What kind of Mage are you? It's been a day and I haven't felt your magic shift. Do you not do any magic? I cannot understand the knot if you do not pull the strings."

I stare at her. She is speaking in riddles.

"What is your name?" I ask quickly. Remembering that we need more details about her.

She searches in my mind, I feel her there. Like when there's a tick burrowing in your skin somewhere but you can't see where. You just *know* it. It's a feeling of invasion.

I want to struggle against it but don't know how. When you can't see the tick you can't try to take it out.

"Learn that my ethereal name is Vissa. Hear that your legends are wrong. The cowardly Odin killed Vör, not Frigg. He was a big jealous bully that deserves vengeance for what he's done."

She shimmers to the bed. The snowflake moths are like living waves.

"Come on, boy. Pull at the strings and let me see where each leads. Which is yours, which is not, where they lead and what they are."

"Which strings? You make no sense!"

She groans loudly in my mind - a thunder- and I am afraid I will grow deaf from inside out.

Her snowflake moth cloud is starting to spread in the room, crawling to the bed. Are they multiplying? Are they real? Is it magic?

The first thing it touches is my bare toe. It feels like an ice burn. Whatever it is, it hurts.

I curl my toes and pull my feet away and then leap up on the bed.

“Hey! What the hell?”

I instinctively summon my sword and hold it up in front of me, gripping it in both hands.

“Use your magic, child. Do something with it. Pull at the strings. I want to observe. Come on now.” She waves an impatient hand at me. A few snowflake moths fly off and fall on the bed.

“I can’t!” I am exasperated. For someone that knows so much she doesn’t know how terrible I am at magic. “My wand is on the desk.” I offer it as a lame excuse.

And even if I take it and use it, I will probably blow a hole in the ceiling with whatever spell I might try. Maybe I'll try something easy, like *up up in the air* with a book, and hope it doesn’t blow *up up* in the air.

She snorts.

“Use your toothpick!” her mist circles my sword and then the snowmoths dissipate.

“That’s not how magick spells work. I need my wand.”

“Oh child, I *know* how it works. Use *this*!”

Her burning mist is creeping on Baz’s bed now, and I move closer to the wall. I think about hacking at the mist but really, how will it work? Is this what she means?

I will only cut Baz’s bed in half and will have to explain to him how stupid I am. I don’t want that.

She looks at me expectantly and then something clicks. The epiphany I was expecting to fall on my head creeps in me from all the sides at once.

All these years of unsuccessfully trying to use the wand, the feeling of oneness with the sword, the fact that I am coming from mages and not Normals how I thought. *Use your toothpick* .

Use the sword, Simon . I tell myself in Penny’s voice.

I raise my sword at the Ethereal and cast **Kindly back off!**

The mist moves back and the Ethereal, Vissa, shimmers a couple of feet back. She leers.

It worked. Was it a fluke?

Excitement floods me. Try it again, Simon!

I point my sword at the table cloth slash empress cape. **Up Up and away!**

It starts floating and keeps going up until it reaches the ceiling. I am so caught up in the joy of it that I don’t notice that Vissa, the Ethereal, has disappeared. Does this mean I can contain the power now?

The door opens and I startle, losing control over the cape. It falls on Baz just as he enters the room.

He looks like a ghost. He rips the thing in half, freaking out a little. I jump up and down on his bed, holding my sword up like a victory flag.

I end up sticking it in the wooden ceiling.

BAZ

This day keeps getting stranger.

I am attacked by a flying ghost that turns out to be the table cloth. I freak out properly but do not show it, I have dignity and pride, thank you very much. - except I do let the bag of crackers fall down and the book I am holding sort of slips down at the surprise moment of contact. I rip the cloth in half and emerge victorious into the den of madness.

Snow is on *my* bed, jumping up and down like a puppy on a trampoline, and apparently I interrupted him hacking at the ceiling. He is grinning from ear to ear. A labrador with curly hair full of joy and wonder.

“Baz! Baz! ” He leaves the sword hanging in the ceiling and jumps down leaping towards me. He grabs my shoulders and shakes me a little. “I did it!”

“Yay. You stabbed the ceiling.” I am confused by this display of joy *and* moreover by his first instinct to approach *me* in his state of joy. I guess since I am the only other available person...

“What? No, not this.” His face is so close, he looks at me expectantly. As if I will comprehend everything from his elaborate explanation just now. “Just.” He leaves my shoulders and runs to my bed. He stands on it and struggles to take the sword out. “Can you, erm, use your vampire strength?” I roll my eyes and point at the floor. “Down. You, walking disaster.”

He obeys, but his grin doesn’t fade. He looks positively ecstatic. I did not expect to find him like this. I expected to find him half dead, impaled on his sword.

I jump on the bed and grab the handle of the sword and pull. “Nothing happens.” he says disappointed.

I can see that. I am a little disappointed myself.

I pull harder. Still nothing.

“What happened here exactly?” I demand.

“I magicked the table cloth *up up in the air* .”

“How marvelous. You managed a second year spell. Did the ceiling not show enough appreciation so you decided to stab it? Is that what awaits me if I don’t show enough appreciation for this extraordinary feat of magickal prowess?”

“No, you annoying thesaurus! I magicked it using my sword instead of my wand. Like how Penny

uses her ring! And before that there was the *back off* spell against the ethereal - and they both worked! So I got excited and jumped up and -"

"- impaled the ceiling?"

"Yeah," he admits sheepishly.

I take out my wand and spell **A Place for Everything and Everything in Its Place!**

But nothing happens.

Hm. That's weird.

We exchange glances with Snow.

"Snow. What did you do?" I cannot help but leak suspicion. I am NOT used to my spells not working.

I try **Down, boy!** I used it once to get the crackers on the top shelf. However, the intended result is horrible: Sparks fly around the sword and nothing happens, except I get an annoying scare.

I try **Free at last!** Again with no avail. I feel like I am wasting magic.

"Snow. Explain." I sit on his bed, in case the sword decides to boop me in the head with the hilt or Merlin forbid, with the cutting edge. Now *that* would be a stupid death. Fiona would probably summon me from the actual dead to chastise me thoroughly. *Pitches don't get killed by falling swords, Basil!* I can practically hear her voice.

Snow goes and sits on my bed, oblivious to the danger. It figures.

The Chosen One is going to die via some sort of weird version of harakiri and I will be the only one to tell the tale.

"Snow." I roll my eyes at him. I look up pointedly at the sticking sword.

"Oh." Understanding dawns on him and he bounces from my bed to his with such marvelous lack of grace that he lands next to me, bumping my shoulder and his thigh ends up pressing against mine.

I arch one eyebrow to mask how flustered his closeness makes me.

He scoots to the side and puts some inches between us. I can still feel his heat, so the eyebrow stays up. He moves another few inches away and there is a sort of sadness flickering in his eyes. It makes me feel like an arsehole. Like I just kicked a lying puppy.

"Explain." I try to make my voice gentle, to compensate for the sadness that I am not used to seeing in his face. He nods.

"The Ethereal came. Her name is Vissa and she said through lots of riddled words that she needs me to use my magic for her to understand which one is mine, which one is not. She said, pull at the strings." I try to keep up with what he is saying but while speaking he somehow manages to scoot closer again and I am awash with warmth radiating from him. Does he have a fucking radiator hidden under that hoodie?

"Her mist bit me with ice, like frostbite, I mean, it was moving towards me. And when it touched

me she - ” he looks at his toes, wiggling the big toe in the sock, which sports an adorable hole. I blush a little but he doesn’t notice.

“Did it burn a hole in your sock?”

“Yes, well, no.” He seems conflicted. “The hole was there.”

That was a test. I noticed the hole when we were in the kitchen. I just wanted to check if he is honest.

“But it touched my skin and it burned. So I took out my sword, but you said Ethereals can’t be hacked at with physical objects even and I thought you’d be pissed if I hacked your bed - ”

He keeps talking as I marvel at this exclusive peek at what goes on in Snow’s head on a regular basis. How does he navigate this chaos of tumbling words and constantly dispersing thoughts? Remarkable that he has managed to not get himself killed until now.

“You contemplated hacking my bed.”

“Well, no, not your bed, the mist, but the bed would have been a casualty.”

“Ya think?”

He laughs nervously.

“That’s not the point, Baz. I told her I can’t cast anything. That my wand is on my desk”

Again. Typical Snow.

“She said to use the sword to cast the spell and then I did. And it worked.”

I probably look dubious because he begins even more animatedly.

“It makes sense, doesn’t it? The sword is a magickal ancient heirloom, perhaps even stronger than the wand, which came into the family only like a generation ago, and when the Mage made me the Mage’s heir, the sword sort of became my magickal object. So, instead of trying to use the wand, I should have used the sword. So I did and it worked and then… I did the happy dance and she disappeared and you just came in and the sword got stuck and- ”

I shake my head even before he finished talking.

“That’s not how it works. Penny can use the ring because it is a FAMILY heirloom. You can only use magickal objects to cast spells if they come from your blood-line… Magic doesn’t care for adoption… oh fuck. Oh fuck.”

His face drains of blood. It becomes as white as mine. Things finally click into place.

“The Mage is your blood relation.” I say what he is thinking.

It makes sense.

“No.” his head is shaking, curls falling in disarray.

“He might be your father, Snow.” The Mage might be Snow’s real biological father.

“No, no, you’re wrong.” he mutters, trying to swallow and failing.

“I think you know I’m not. That’s the ONLY way magickal heirlooms work.” I reply quietly. It is the only way magickal heirlooms work. It follows that Snow is the Mage’s son.

“The sword *listens t* o you. Your wand doesn’t. Never has. You... you magicked the table cloth right on my head -”

“That’s not what… shut up, Baz!” he is shaking his hands and balling his fists but I ignore it.

I ignore him and go on, getting more certain of the discovery as I speak. The gravity of this overwhelms everything else and I barely register the smell of smoke.

I keep thinking to myself: *It all makes sense. The fucking monster. The fucking fucked up monster!*

“Remember what the Ethereal said!” I add and my voice seems strange as if from far away. “That you come from a powerful magical family? The Mage is one powerful fucker, and if your mother was as powerful or even more -”

“ **Back the fuck off, Baz** !” he doesn’t use anything, not the wand, not the sword.

I fly off the bed and my back hits the desk. I wait for Anathema to kick in but it doesn’t.

Sparks fly and ignite the blanket in some places - and I am happy I wasn’t there when they started burning. They die off quickly, though.

The smell of magicked smoke becomes now impossible, it fills my lungs and I can feel his magic leaking all over the place.

Snow is going to go off, and this is how I die. Blown off by the Mage’s heir. The *real, actual* fucking Mage’s heir.

Snow jumps off the bed so fast and furious he is like a God of wrath. He grabs me by the collar of my shirt and yanks.

“No.” he tells me and I feel like this is the only thing he is capable of saying. That he got stuck at this word and everything is imploding inside this little, horrible sounding NO.

I resist him but do not engage him. His fist is raised for a hit. His eyes are mad and tears are streaming on his face. A constant downpour. “No.” his voice cracks.

“No.”

Poor baby. I think. And then, an echo of what I should think: *no. This is my chance. He throws a punch - he is out of Watford.* Anathema will kick him out for good. I will not have to suffer being so close to the sun and never getting any warmth from it. The thoughts are bitter and worn out. Are they even relevant now?

I should let him punch me. I should let him be out of my life. I should.

I SHOULD!

I can’t...

“Snow! Anathema! Don't!” I shout in his face. And then quieter, “Don’t, Simon.” I can’t believe I am doing this. His fist relaxes and then the room around me disappears.

Chapter End Notes

What if Simon is NOT the worst chosen one? What if he just isn't using the right tools and is mentored by a massive dickhead? I just wanted him to feel the joy of magic, to have it easy at least for once. poor baby, always going through some shit.

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

> I yank him closer to me, covering his ankle with my hand.
>
> “The dead do not love, child.” The mist vines around my hand where it covers Snow’s skin and it burns me. "Not like this." It burns so much I scream in agony. I do not let go.
>
> “The dead do not feel pain, child. Not like this.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

SIMON

He kept talking and talking and my ears were ringing. It felt like I was under water.

My mother. Baz said ‘ *your mother’* and it short circuited me. I thought: I have a mother? (I mean, of course I have a mother. That’s basic biology. But at that moment it seemed like something from a scifi movie.)

The Mage. My father? (What? No. No. Just no.)

My life has always been an either-or situation. Either unwanted, or an orphan. I*suspected* I was unwanted. I *admitted* mayb *e* I was an orphan.

It didn’t matter *really* . What mattered was that I had *no one and nothing* until the Mage. Until Watford. Until Magic. Until Penny and Agatha. And until Baz - my obsession. My nemesis. But the Mage was the bridge to all things magickal.

Hearing Baz say it out loud… that The Mage could be my father. *My actual father. (!!!)*

It broke me. The implications of that fucking broke me.

Think with me for a second - If I am his actual son, and he *knew* it, (and there is no way he didn’t know, he’s THE fucking Mage) that means that he took me in not as his son, but as the chosen one. What a joke...

It’s like when you get gum stuck to your shoe - you threw it away but it came back. It was never your choice but the laws of physics took your choice away. I am the gum in this scenario.

I feel repugnant, dirty, like I could scrub and scrub until I would be bleeding and still, still I would not be clean, I would not be wanted enough. No one wants the gum they threw away. And how annoying it must be - my constant neediness… How many times I sought the Mage out, how many times he had to actively avoid or ignore me?

How embarrassing, really.

He comes into contact with me only on Chosen One business, (and even then I am a constant source of disappointment) other than that he would rather not see me ever again. It's high time I accept this.

I want to stop feeling like this - betrayed and sad and wanting all the same.

So I make a list. Lists help. (Penny says so. It must be true.)

1.The Mage never wanted me as his son

2.He discarded me

3. He picked me up only when I proved to be a tool.

3.1(A faulty tool.)

3.2 A soldier.

3.3 (An obedient soldier.)

3.4 A weapon.

3.5 (A misfiring weapon.)

Penny once read to me a story about the prairie - how it's vast and open and endless. I feel like that. Like I am an open ended prairie - made of sadness and grief.

There is a void filling with water in the center of my chest and it feels like I am drowning. Can you drown from inside out? Can the prairie drown? I can.

At the bottom of this void, where there is so much fear cloaked in darkness, there lies a question that is even scarier than all my lists above: How could Baz ever want me when I am so unwantable? When I am the Mage's actual - discarded- son?

How could he ever love me (like in the visions), if I am the Mage's son *by blood* ? He who is of old blue blood. He who has the Mage harassing his family and all that the old families stand for.

And then comes certainty. Like a big fat period - I know for a fact, that Baz will never love me now.

Now, when I am my father's son.

It feels like I lie in this limbo of self pitying for an eternity, but I suppose it's less than that.

And then I know:

I would rather he hate me for what I *do* , then for what I *am.*

So I punch him in the face. I punch Baz in the face with all that I've got. I compress all the prairies and the voids and the hurt and the want and the desolation in one fist, in one punch.

It feels good only for a fraction of a second - letting out all the rage in another way than going off.

But then sadness comes back. It turns out it doesn't leave this easily. And grief for the family I

could have had… and for the life with Baz that I will never get. Because I am - in actuality - the Mage's heir.

BAZ

Simon Snow makes me bleed.

Usually it is the emotional kind of bleeding, but today it is the physical kind.

The blood-gushing-from-spliced-skin-on-cheekbone kind of bleeding.

The kind that I am capable of taking. And giving back. (I choose not to.)

It takes me a few moments of bewildered adjustment to realize where we are. There is a torch still burning from my last visit here. From my last rat hunt.

We are in the catacombs.

We were inside our room and now we are not. Fingers snapped and settings changed.

I do not think about the implications of that - somehow Snow teleported me out so that he could fight me and he did it without opening his mouth. And he chose the catacombs: a reminder of who I am, now that I reminded him of who he is.

He is raising his fist for another hit and I can practically see him aiming at my nose. Well, not again, Snow! It is crooked already. (His handiwork too.)

I par with my forearms while he is taking swing after swing. His moves are jerky, desperate. I can feel the salt of his tears dropping on the corners of my mouth. Simon Snow is raining tears on my lips - kisses of pain and anger. It hurts to see him hurt like this. His pain echoes in me and I don't fight it.

When he opens himself for another swing I sit up, reach for him with both my arms and grab hold of his middle, locking my hands at his back, tucking my head against his body. I have him in a lock and it seems to startle him but he doesn't stop fighting back. I immediately wrap one leg around his foot, effectively trapping it. With my right arm I go for an overhook, sliding it from underneath him and above his shoulder. I bridge up with my left foot and explode up using my hips, pushing with my left arm and pulling with the right, after swinging it hard against his side. This rotates him over and gets me on top. I am in between his open hips and grab hold of his wrists, extending them above his head.

He struggles for a few seconds but to no avail. I hold him tight, waiting for him to calm down. He shuts his eyes - tears constantly running down his cheeks, and averts his face, trying to hide himself from me.

An immense wave of compassion washes over me. He doesn't want me seeing him like this. I am the bearer of horrible news - he has parents that do not give a single fuck about him. Parents like the Mage. If that monster was my dad I would off myself.

“Get the fuck off me, Baz!” He says through gritted teeth but he says it with no magic and there is no hint of smoke in the air.

It feels like he’s given up on burning.

A fat drop of blood rolls on to his cheek from my cheekbone where he spliced it earlier with his surprise punch.

It feels like he’s given up. Period.

I cannot allow that.

I stare at the red trickle on his skin and because I am a complete twisted psycho, I lean in, slowly, deliberately, and lick my blood off of him, mixed with his tears and sweat. I do it slowly and find his eyes open wide and staring at me.

I remove my hands from his wrists and roll off him.

We both lie on the floor. Our shoulders touching.

None of us speaks. None of us moves away.

I can still feel the salty taste of Snow mixed with the coppery feel of my vampire blood.

I can still feel the pulse in his wrist beating against my palms. The heat of his body pressed against mine. The curls stuck to his forehead from sweat are burnt on the back of my closed lids.

I close my eyes tighter and press on them with balled fists. I can still see his face etched forever on the back of my eyelids.

We are such a mess. He probably thinks I am deranged and he is probably right.

I don’t know why I did it. I just really really wanted to.

We lie like this for a while, I keep waiting for him to speak. But he doesn’t.

When I look up at him he is passed out.

I missed the blue glow of his hands.

He is not alone though.

There right beside his body bends a figure floating on a blue cloud .

“Ethereal” I say, sitting up.

“Vampire.” she replies.

“Get away from him.” I get up slowly, not wanting to spook her. I feel for my wand and then notice it has fallen out and is a meter or so away from me.

“He makes holes in the fabric when he steals too much at once. The fabric patches itself when he takes a little, when he uses it for teleportation and wordless magic. But not when he burns through too much. Then the spot just...dies.”

She looks at me and I realize her lips aren’t moving. She is a mindspeaker! (Snow forgot to mention that!) There are spells to stun mind speakers. Fiona dated one once and stunned the hell out of him.

I do not waste energy to open my mouth when speaking.

“When will the damn visions stop, Ethereal?”

“I don’t know.” She sounds surprised to not know. I wonder what her original language is. Mindspeakers communicate using the mind of the person, so whatever they say in whatever language it gets translated to something that the brain understands. It’s probably some Norse old language. I know the word bloddrekka - bloodsucker, from when I tried to do some research on what kind of a monster I am. So it makes sense that my mind doesn’t feel the need to translate it, since I already know what it means.

“My spell never got spliced before. He is an interesting research subject, two forms of magic wielded in one body. Fascinating,” she reaches out to touch his hand and I grab Snow’s arms and pull him away from her, sliding him closer to me.

“Don’t! Your touch burns him.”

“And his touch burns you.”

She shimmers closer to me and I tell her in my mind: *Fuck off, and die.*

“If I die, who will stop the vision from your kærr? When his mind splices in between this world and the one that doesn’t exist yet? When his mind breaks and shatters and only parts of him are left, and I am not here to stop the shattering, what will you do then, Bloddrekka?” Her gaze intensifies as it studies me. I try to hide the shiver that goes through me at her words about Snow.

“You are a strange creature for your kind. Your life force is not aglow as it should be.”

“That’s because I’m fucking dead,” I snap at the stupid godlike creature. She makes me curse so much. My Mother would be aghast. But then, I don’t think that my cursing would bother her more than my lack of humanity and presence of vampirism.

The misty cloud of blue ice moths makes tentacles of some sort and creeps on Snow’s sock and to his bare ankle. I yank him closer to me, covering his ankle with my hand.

“The dead do not love, child.” The mist vines around my hand where it covers Snow’s skin and it burns me. It burns so much I scream in agony. I do not let go. "Not like this." Her voice is everywhere.

“The dead do not feel pain, *child* . Not like this.”

Once she made her point, the mist retreats and I gather Snow to my chest, holding him tightly. I crawl back until I meet a wall. My fangs popped out from pain I think. She has no blood for me to suck, no throat to rip apart - however strongly I might want to do it.

“You mages scorn life, insult it when you look down on everything that is not Mage. You do not know what it feels to hold on to it, to scrap life from bits and pieces, like I do… You are too small to comprehend the grandeur of life and magic. You are alive as a *vampire* , Mageling. Accept that. Respect that.”

She expands her mist and I start noticing the swirls of snowflake moths becoming agitated, chaotic. Then she goes back to the size she was. She sighs in my mind and it feels like a breeze stuck inside the walls of my cranium.

“You deny yourself, child.” she cocks her head, watching me closely, looking into me. I shiver, retracting my fangs, finally getting some control.

“If you want the future that he’s in now. You must stop doing denying yourself.”

“With the risk of sounding repetitive, Ethereal: Fuck off and die!”

“Pesky little bloddrekka, infuriating tiny mageling, who do you think you are to talk like this to me? I have lived through wars and disasters and I have outlived monsters you couldn’t even fathom. I have garnered knowledge from all over this world and others. You are but a small speck of dust, maybe interesting enough just to see how mage and vampire mix in one. An experiment to study when one is bored of other things.”

She pins me with her blue glare and I shiver. The arctic blue mist keeps swirling and swirling - it’s like I’ve angered the snow insects.

I can’t stop shivering. Snow is cold too. It makes me scared. He is usually as hot as a sun. I listen for his heart beat. Yes, it’s there.

It feels like the Ethereal is moving on me, although she is still. She pins me with her curious gaze. Something is happening.

And then my fangs pop out. Again.

“So easy. Push a button, get a vampire.”

And then without my consent one fang retracts. I had no idea they could do that!

“Push another - and get half a vampire.”

“Push a third - and you get the *blooddrekka.* ”

My mouth fills with teeth, not just my fangs, but all my hidden vampire teeth come out. I can’t control them. She is doing something inside me, wearing me like a glove and dipping me in dirt and blood and acid.

“Remember that I can reach inside you, child of two worlds. And dare not speak to me as if you

have any say in what happens to you."

I ignore her words ringing in my head and instead try to pull them back (the fucking teeth the fucking fangs!), terror overwhelming me - what if Snow wakes, what if Snow sees!

Disgusting, horrible teeth fill my mouth. I am a monster cradling the most golden human mage and if he wakes nothing will be the same. Yes, he may know theoretically that I am a vampire. When he is confronted with the horrific reality of my condition he will never look at me the same. It will destroy this tentative connection we have going on at the moment. I can't let it be destroyed, not until I figured out how real it is.

I try to control the teeth but nothing happens. I sob once. Twice. I can hear her cackling in my head, deafening me.

I can't let Snow see me like this!

She vanishes but her laughter stays with me even long after I managed to get my fangs under control. The floor is filled with dead snowflake moths. There are tears drying on my face and on Snow's.

SIMON

To lie in his arms is a blessing. So what if there is a raging storm outside. There is safety and comfort in being tangled with Baz. The floor of the headmaster's office (aka my husband's office) is hard (we should probably magick it soft) but I am technically sprawled on the headmaster's chest and abdomen and legs - I am half lying on top of him.

Baz fingers my necklace. Opens it and closes it. He is gentle with it. I know what he sees inside Blonde hair, blue eyes - like mine, kind knowing smile. A beautiful woman.

"Your Mother would have been proud of you." Baz whispers in my hair and kisses it.

"My father isn't."

"Well, he is kind of a dick, so..."

"The opinions of dicks don't count apriori." It's what Penny says.

"True."

"I wish… I wish I could talk to him." I confess.

"You can go visit him."

"Yea… I don't think he'll want to see me. He didn't want to. The last n times I tried."

"He's a proud man, Simon. A proud asshole of a man. But as much as I don't like him, if you need him in your life, I will stand by you and support you until he comes around. And Simon, love, he

will come around. I am sure."

I have buried hope for a reunion with the Mage so many times. I don't say this to Baz, but I think maybe it's time for me to let him go. There is only so much trying one can do before it becomes damaging for oneself. *I wish I had it in me to hate him after what he did. after what he attempted to do to me. But I can't.*

***

The storm rages the next day as well. I worry about the restaurant and call Jackie but she assures me she can take care of it. And really, if anyone can, that's Jackie.

To get some added value from my staying at Watford I teach a combat class for sword and dagger wielding and then do a QnA about the Humdrum. Some kids want to know about the Mage, but I tell them I am too exhausted to talk about him. And it's true. I still haven't found the strength to think or talk about him. I bury thoughts about him in the dark corners of my mind and never venture there. It's a fool's errand, trying to get there and to survive unharmed.

There is a great fresco painting of young Baz and young me facing the Humdrum (who is a kid with glowing red eyes for some reason). (No one knows that the kid should look like a young me).

"The ball was red, the eyes were Simon Blue."

"There's no such colour," I protest.

"It is in my world."

In the painting we are holding hands, Baz has his wand in his right hand and I have my sword in the left one.

"Do you think the author of the painting knew we're queer?" I ask.

"I think they know now."

"They probably thought we were really good friends."

"We've never been really good friends. We were really bad enemies and then really good lovers."

We grin at each other.

"I used to think you have an eating disorder."

"I used to think you were straight."

"So did I."

We both laugh at that.

"We should have communicated more."

"Probably."

**

In the evening, I take a stroll through the headmaster's personal library. Baz showed me the secret door the last time I visited him at work, and now I am snooping around. There is some messed up dark stuff that I am not touching, but other stuff seems in the beloved grey area of morally ambiguous.

"You know I am really turned on when you show interest in books, right?"

"That was the plan all along when I took out this book on - " I close the cover and read the title, "Forbidden spells with literary origins"

"This book is a sponge book - it absorbs and rewrites new phrases and deletes old ineffective ones when they go out of use and their power wanes." Baz explains.

"Nice. I wish we had this when we were roommates. It would have made being good enemies so much better."

"There are a few spells here that I myself would have used on you, Snow."

The name rolls off his lips with an old sneer that I used to hate in school. I get into his personal space.

"Call me that again and I might have to spank you, Basil."

He grins wider and his fangs pop. I know he does it on purpose. To turn me on. He sometimes goofs around and walks around the house with one fang out. It looks ridiculous and never fails to make me laugh. I still find it hard to believe how far we've come with the subject of vampirism, that he can make light about it.

I press him against the bookshelves and slowly grind against him.

He kisses my mouth, gently tangling out tongues. I love kissing him with his fangs out. It must be similar to when he magicks fire - he's a highly flammable pyro that just can't help himself.

It takes two more days for the roads to get back to functionality. I got to watch Baz work and be in full Boss mode, which was a bonus. Interacting with the students at Watford also felt intense. I was constantly getting senses of deja vu. I ate some scones from the cafeteria - they still serve them - and I realized either I had very low standards when I was going there, or they were not as good as I remember them.

We go home and have two messages on our landline. One is from a conference that Baz wanted to attend - The Climate Crisis - a problem not only by and for the Normals.

He was accepted as a speaker. There are some mage scientists he wants to meet there, so he is glowing with joy when he hears the news.

And the second one is from the Adoption Agency. We've received the green light to start the process.

I wake up with a headache.

My mouth is dry and I am starving. How long have I been out? Eons?

I groan trying to sit up and before falling back down a pair of strong arms catches me and cushions me back to the bed.

“What… I.. Baz?”

I touch his face with my fingers. He looks so young. I look around. I am in the Watford room.

This is not… this is *now*.

I bury my face in my hands and remember what happened before I went into the vision. It feels like trying to remember where I went to sleep when I am conscious of dreaming inside the dream and can’t wake up. It feels like trying to walk under water.

Baz doesn’t say anything so I open my eyes and peer at him through my fingers. There is a frown on his forehead that I want to smooth with my thumb.

I curl my fingers in a fist to stop myself from reaching out to him.

I want to tell him everything - this is what I do in the visions - I constantly want to share with him, want him to share with me. The want to know and be known.

Now, when I still wear the vision’s imprint of mutual trust and sharing, all I want to do is get cozy in his arms and tell him that I saw my mother in a photo and that she is beautiful. Instead I say, “I’m hungry.”

He laughs and suddenly the tightness in my chest eases. He runs his fingers through my hair and I barely hold back a purr. He seems grateful. I want him to keep touching me. It seems that whenever I’m out or physically injured - touching becomes acceptable.

“I figured. You were out for a few hours. I was checking your pulse and everything.”

“You were feeling me up, were you?” the flirty jab slips through my mouth before I manage to remind myself that this is not the time and place in which Baz and I have this kind of relationship.

I just punched the guy. Well, not just just. More like two hours ago.

He licked his own blood from my face. So that happened. I try not to think about how that memory makes me feel.

The three days spent in the visions sort of fucked my adjustment speed to this one.

It feels like waking up in the wrong bed.

It’s like when I am in the visions, I am abandoning all awareness of *this* self and instead piggyback on the potential future Simon. I get to try on his feelings, to walk around in them. And then, when I return, I have to reconcile them with whatever mess is happening inside me right now. It’s like, I

don’t have that much emotional flexibility to juggle with all of them.

I just came back with 3 days worth of loving Baz and being loved back, also 3 days of knowing the Mage doesn’t want to speak to me even though I am his son and being relatively ok with that.

In the visions being ok is the status quo, something to always fall back on, something to push myself off of and get to ecstatic, happy.

Can being ok for a while, knowing how it feels to feel ok, compensate for the emotional bomb that is learning about my parents? I am not sure if it compensates, but it makes it bleed less inside. I suppose it will take me a while to process everything, and all I want to do now is not have to deal with it. So I push it away.

He hands me a bowl with hot buttered noodles. I am sure he magicked it hot for me.

He sits beside his bed on the floor, facing me, and watches me eat, like a weirdo.

“How’s your face?” I find the most brilliant way to break the ice.

“Fine. You hit like the Mage’s heir.”

I wince. He realizes his slip immediately and looks apologetic but doesn’t say anything. Baz from the future would have kissed me better.

“How did I get here? Did you carry me?”

He probably could. He is strong.

He nods. “I got tired of waiting for you to wake up. The catacombs aren’t the best place to chill during winter.”

We assess each other for a few seconds.

“I spent days in the visions.” my voice feels dry. “Never happened before. Do you think it means something?” I speak around my food but he doesn’t mock me.

“Days?”

I nod.

“Days.”

“Shit.”

“Yeah.”

With me on my bed and him on the floor, it feels weird to see him from a higher point. Usually I look up when I interact with him. I slide to the floor, careful not to spill any food. Now we are at the same level.

“Why are you sitting on the floor?”

He looks up pointedly at the ceiling with the sword impaled.

Fuck. My sword.

“Nothing works?”

“No, Snow, I think your happy dance insulted the sword and now it’s gone all Escalibur on your ass.”

I groan.

This is so like me, the moment I get the sword to handle magic, I insult it into the ceiling. How nice. I eat aggressively and then Baz tells me about Vissa’s visit and her words about me ruining my sanity unless she stops the visions.

“Do you think she will make them stop?”

“Not until she finishes studying your magic. I think she cannot overstep your agreement.”

I sigh. “Like a demon?”

“Demons aren’t the only ones making blood deals.” His face is only slightly bruised. I got him in the cheekbone. My hand is probably worse than his face. I check my knuckles furtively but they're fine. And of course he notices - the observant arse! Even young Baz notices more than I ever would.

“I magicked your hand back to health. You were bruised.”

“You should have seen the other guy..”

“Yeah, was he handsome?”

“Yeah,” I reply while munching on the noodles and again! Again with the messed up reply.

I understand I have to tell Baz why I am acting so weird because he chokes a little when I drawl my dreamy *yeah* .

And Baz never chokes on anything. I do. I regularly choke on my own spit for fucks sake.

Nevermind choking on food. This reminds me that I have never seen Baz eat anything more than celery sticks the other day. If I interpret my words from the visions correctly, Baz doesn’t have an eating disorder.

I wonder if there is a scenario in which he doesn’t hate me for who I am, he isn’t ashamed of who or what he is, a scenario in which we simply exist the way we are, and that is enough. Not less, not more, just, enough.

We should have communicated more. The wiser, more mature version of myself said in the visions. Maybe I should do just that.

“Do you hate me now?”

“What do you mean now?” he retorts immediately.

I feel like there is an “I’ve always hated you and I haven't stopped” but he doesn't say it.

“I mean, um, now that you know I am *his* son, thus I am the son of your family’s enemy. Does that make you hate me?”

“You’re such a fool, Simon Snow.” He shakes his head. He rests his head on his bed and speaks quietly. I watch his Adam’s apple move when he swallows.

“I don’t hate you. Well, not for that.”

“Why do you hate me for, then?” Why hate me at all? Love me, you fool!

“I can’t say.” he shakes his head slowly.

“Can’t or won’t?”

“Won’t.” His voice is so quiet it’s lower than a whisper. It is small like a child’s. I want to cradle him to my chest.

“So, nothing’s changed between us?”

I don’t know what answer I want to hear. I just want him to engage with me. Being ok for 3 days in the vision makes me ok with hoping. (gag. Hoping is the worst.)

“Something surely changed.” He looks at me. “Like. I didn’t poison the food this time. And you forgot to accuse me of it.”

“I am sorry for that.” he starts to shake it off but I go on, “I am sorry for always assuming the worst about you. I was wrong to do that. No one deserves to be assumed the worst of them.” *Especially not you.*

“ Except the Mage. *”* he says under his breath.

I think about a good place to start unravelling this mess. He extends his long legs and they reach my bed. I extend my legs beside his, almost touching. I reach for my blanket and offer it to him.

He must be cold. He always is.

He takes this peace offering and says, “You know I have my own blanket.”

I almost say, *yea, but this one has my scent on it,* but I stop myself in time.

“I am sorry I punched you.” I tell him.

“Stop apologizing, Snow. You make it sound like you’re the bad guy and I am some saint.” he rakes his hair angrily. I think he is angry with himself.

“I can't believe I am saying this. but I deserved it. I was pushing you with the Mage being your

father and it probably was a lot for you to take."

"It was. Thank you for saying that."

Awkward silence. This is uncharted territory.

"How are you now?"

"Less volatile."

"That's good, right?"

"Yes, thank you."

We both stare at each other in wonderment. We have never in the history of our acquaintance had such an empathetic conversation. I think we both savor the moment.

"Baz."

"Mmm?"

"May I ask you a question?"

"You are so mindful you are literally creeping me out. But go ahead. I reserve the right to tell you to bugger off, though. If it is another question of the *ArE yOu gAY* sort."

He says it lightly, but I can hear the tension masked underneath.

The subject I want to approach is not easy either.

"Why have I never seen you eat? And you know I've stalked you like forever."

His features close up.

"I want to use that right. Of not answering. And telling you off."

I nod. I should respect his answer, his desire for privacy. That's what Simon from the visions would do. And I know it because he (Potential future Simon) is rubbing off on me, but I am still me, so I push:

"May I speculate and if I get it right you tell me?"

He ponders this. "This is utterly childish, but ok."

"I don't think it's because you *can't* eat food, because I saw you crunch some celery sticks the other day, today? I don't know anymore, I am sorry. And I don't think it's because you don't need to, you know due to your vampirism, because I have seen proof of your chips eating habits during the night.

It could be a dark ploy to avoid being poisoned? But who would poison you? Why?

Or to make people make up theories about you - although, to be fair, I think I am the only one obsessed enough with you to make up theories." He snorts at that and brings his right foot in between mine. I take it as a good sign. He bumps my foot with his. I bump him back.

"So what is left is that it's somehow related to your fangs, but that doesn't make any sense. I've eaten with you countless times and nothing is amiss..."

"What?" he stops me, his hand on my ankle.

"We eat together in the visions. Why don't you eat now? Tell me and I will tell you what I see in the visions."

"I don't eat because I am an open mouth chewer. It's my only defect and I don't want people knowing I am not perfect." he tries to remove his foot from where it is but I trap it with my feet, holding on to him there. Maintaining the contact.

Don't run. Don't hide. Engage with me.

"This is not fair. You're running away."

He crosses his arms. I touch the place on my ankle where his hand was just seconds ago. The place hums with electricity.

I sigh at the ceiling. Frustrated. How do I make this work? I must have done it once. (The visions are not a fantasy, but something that could be real, which means I have it in me to make it work.)

"Baz. Tell me the truth. Please? Make it easier for me to tell you the truth."

His nostrils flare. He looks cornered.

"My truth is also scary," I confess.

"Yes. It is because of my fangs. They pop up when I eat food, other than crunchy veggies." His jaw is set, like he expects this to be a disaster. His brows are furrowed and I think that this must cost him a lot, to be this vulnerable. He doesn't know that I would die a thousand deaths for him, that I would kill a thousand more creatures, beings and people for him. He doesn't know any of this, so his honesty is scary. Precious. Tentative. A gift.

"You're there in my visions." I whisper and look him in the eyes. If he can muster the courage to be vulnerable, I can be as well. "In all of them -" I tug at his foot that is still trapped between my ankles. I bend forward and place a palm on his leg, so that he understands *this.* How important this is.

"In ALL of them, Baz."

"What is going on in those visions, what are they about?" he glances at where my palm is and then back up. He licks his lips.

“They are about our lives. Together. As a couple.”

“What?” I don’t know why he is so surprised. I mean, I am usually the clueless one.

I expect him to laugh, but he seems too shocked for that. His diaphragm must be stuck or something.

“We’re husbands,” I decide to tell him, in for a penny in for a pound (Speaking of which, I miss Penny) “and... and we are sickeningly cute together, and we’re so *good* together, and it’s just, you know, so fucking weird being here and there. And I see you here and it’s different. Our whole dynamic is so different. It’s fucked up that in one reality you can barely stand me and in another we light up each other’s lives.”

He opens his mouth to speak but then closes it again. I wait for him to come around to words.

“That’s why you were acting like.... Like this- ” he waves a hand at me, unable to produce an adequate word.

I shrug.

“And you know I am a vampire.” another nod-shrug from me. I have regressed to shrugging Simon.

“And you’re ok with that?” He seems outraged. Like, how dare I be ok with something so horrible.

I roll my eyes. Such a stupid question. “I*am crazy in love with you, stupid.* Of course I know. Of course I don't mind. So you’re a vampire. You’re Baz. You’re you. Whatever comes with that - I will take.

Actually... I think your fangs are a kink of mine.”

Emotions flicker on his face, they change so fast I can’t pinpoint them all. Hope, surprise, hunger, resentment… I don’t know.

His mouth curls downward. I swallow hard, bracing myself for his disgust. He doesn’t say anything but he isn't looking at me either.

“I mean,” I chime in to save the situation “in the potential future. Because that is not real (yet!), it might never happen. Probably won’t. But anyways. It *feels* all very real. And you look healthier there. And you’re happy. You smile. And you’re extremely cuddly.” I swallow loudly. This honesty thing is scary and hard, yet so freeing. ”And you laugh so easily, Baz.”

How do I stop this downpour of information? I should jam a fist down my throat and end both of our miseries.

I just want him to know. I want him to know about us. About himself - that he can be full of joy and mirth. That he can be unashamed of who and what he is.

“And all these feelings that I have for you in this potential future, they stay with me after I come back. It’s like.. I can’t keep the realities straight anymore, everything is mixed up. The feelings I

have for you there have overflown in this reality and I can't know my truth anymore."

He stands up so abruptly if he was sitting in a chair he would have kicked it down.

"Are there any useful things you can tell me, Snow? Aside from details of the heart? Or is this potential future a telenovela?"

I swallow bile and tears. I shall not cry. This is not my Baz, my Baz would never hurt me like this. So therefore there is no point in feeling hurt.

"Yes, useful for you. Like, about vampire stuff. Eating. Yes." I swallow swallow swallow, and blink blink blink, hoping the tears will get the message and stay the fuck in the tear ducts and the rising bile would just descend back in the stomach.

"You eat in front of people. And your fangs never pop, so maybe you can learn that? And also. There is a secret library in the headmaster's office. There was a book about secret spells or something, maybe we can use it against the Vissa."

"I know there is a secret library. When I was a kid, Mum used to take me there. I think. I dream of it sometimes."

This is such a Baz thing - I think - to dream of books and bookshelves and libraries.

Meanwhile he goes on, oblivious to my melting. "But I can't find the entrance now... I've sneaked many times in the Mage's office and nothing."

"Well, in this potential future, *you* are the headmaster. And I know where to look for the entrance."

"I took you there?"

"You definitely took me there." I blush a little. He's taken me several times.

I am not sure he catches on the innuendo. He doesn't comment. He chews on his lip a little.

"Can you ask questions? Can you change something when you are there?"

"No, it's like I am piggy back riding into my own life. I feel all the wind and the rain and every hop on the road, but I do not get the reins."

I sit while he stands there (he stood up bristling when I started the honesty downpour) and after a while he says, "There's another bowl of noodles."

I shrug.

"I know you want it, you always want more food, that's why I made more."

"Will you eat with me?"

"I ate mine in the kitchen."

"Do you want to share mine?"

He snarls, irritated.

“Where is this coming from? From the overflowing affection from the pseudo future, or from you? From *you right now* ?”

“I… don’t know.”

He looks disappointed. Hurt. “I figured.” He brushes his immaculate trousers.

“Look. Snow. The Ethereal is a mindspeaker. My aunt Fiona used to date one. She talked about spells that can trap the mindspeaker while they are speaking to you in your head and then they become vulnerable. But I haven't found anything in the usual library about that. So I will go hunt in the catacombs - ” he waits pointedly for my interjection, but I simply stare at him, “and you finish your food. And then when -”

“But didn’t you eat recently? Straining yourself physically after such a short time after a meal - won’t that make you queasy?” I am desperate for him to not leave. Not just yet.

“So you haven’t seen me hunt in this pseudo future, have you?” he sneers at me. “I am a mage, Snow, I don’t need to *exert* myself to get prey. And I can drink so delicately that not a drop is spilled.” His speech is heated, angry, like he wants to provoke me.

“I don’t see everything in the visions, I see fragments. Maybe I do help you hunt. Sometimes.“ I tell him, trying to placate him but managing to annoy him further.. “And stop calling it a pseudo future, it’s a potential future. It’s a version of what could happen.” *Of what I wish would happen.*

He glares at me and then stomps away, without another word. Then he opens the door and barks at me, “Don’t forget to hold your hands in your vision line, you defenseless git, if you’re planning on taking a stroll through the tower. There are many flights of stairs to fall down from and *get well soon* can only do so much.”

Then he bangs the door shut and is gone.

“Arrghgh” I growl loudly. And send the pillow flying after him. It hits the door with a satisfying soft thud and then slides down. (My anger has a similar trajectory.)

I forgot how infuriating he is. But this is good. This is *good.* I can keep the timelines straight if I know he makes me mad here and weak in the knees there. (Should it be now and then? It feels more like a place than a time. Anyway.)

I glare at my sword, hanging with the hilt down from the ceiling.

“How stupid.”

I jump on Baz’s bed and mess up his covers intentionally, kicking his pillow down. I grab the end of the hilt and channel all the regret I have for insulting my sword, I say the words that usually make the sword appear from my hip. It sounds like an apology.

It slides easily out of the wooden ceiling and into my hand.

Apology accepted, I suppose.

I jump down and point the sword at Baz's bed. I want to think of a spell to spite him, but then I remember how my disrespectful attitude upset my sword and don't want to repeat the same mistake.

So instead I use my hands like a Normal and tidy up his bed. undoing my earlier mess. If only it were just as easy to undo emotional messes.

I lie on it afterwards, inhaling the scent of cedar and hating it, myself and the world.

I feel restless. Something is wrong. I can't pinpoint what. But Baz drinking from rats makes me edgy. I can't say what exactly it is that feels so wrong, so I try to not fixate on this.

I feel caged in this room, but knowing my luck, the moment I go out I will get a vision, and will break a leg and/or my neck. I wonder if Baz will care. He did tell me to be careful before leaving. So he must care. I don't understand why he is so angry though.

I find his ipod and put on some music.

Then a song triggers a memory (Not a vision! Not a memory from the future! A regular one.) - I once heard a spell used by the girls on the campus. So I try it out. It's the first time in a long time that I am trying a spell on myself. But I trust myself wielding the sword more than I trust myself with a wand.

It is weird, it looks like I want to off myself with it, holding it directed to me. I take a deep breath and concentrate.

Painted nails make Harry beautiful I say with magic and immediately colour appears on my nails. It's a lovely shade of pale blue and green. I admire my handiwork.

Yea. I feel better now.

A song comes on and I have never heard it before. It makes me want to cry, really. Cry and laugh? There should be a word for that.

"25 years and my life is still

Tryin' to get up that great big hill of hope

For a destination..."

Merlin, how I relate.

***

And so I cry sometimes when I'm lying in bed

Just to get it all out, what's in my head

And I, I am feeling a little peculiar

And so I wake in the morning and I step outside

And I take a deep breath and I get real high

And I scream from the top of my lungs

"What's going on?"

My head is in the nook of Baz's shoulder and chest. I am a little teary eyed from the scene on the computer screen.

"Baz. Why does this scene always make me both happy and sad?"

He kisses my hair.

"Because the Wachowskis are obviously brilliant sadists."

We watch the episode till the end and then we go check on Lucy.

We tiptoe because the little minx is clever as a fox and likes to stay reading till late. And then the next day she still manages to wake us up at ungodly hours. Like 7 am.

Sure enough there is a blanket fort and a flashlight shining light on a small figure huddled with a book.

We slide the entrance blanket to the side and Lucy gasps in surprise.

"Oh, my! Was I sleep walking again?" We ignore her attempt at decoy and decide to join her.

We get in the fort and cuddle, the three of us.

*" **Plenty of room for everyone** " Baz magicks the fort bigger so that we don't squish our daughter.*

She is reading Alice in Wonderland. The flashlight is hanging from the makeshift ceiling of the fort.

"Dad, can I have your wand for a jiffy?"

Baz squints suspiciously at her. "What for?"

"I want to try the Let there be light *spell. The flashlight batteries are dying. I will recharge them in the morning."*

Baz and I exchange a glance. We do let her try some spells from time to time, although magicking with someone else's wand is not always working that well, in the past when Lucy tried Baz's (I am NOT giving her my sword) it worked without too many catastrophes.

*" **Let there be light** " she says and the fort lights up. The room around us remains dark.*

She squeals in delight and gives it back to Baz with an air of reverence. I bet Baz loves every second of it. They always had this deep Bond that seems to transcend biology.

"I am already so good with magic." she boasts, straightening her shoulders. "I think Mr Lewis was a mage." (she likes to throw random magic factoids at us) "When will I go to Watford?" (and curveball questions). Sometimes she forgets to wait for answers or to breathe air when she speaks. Like a tiny curly haired talking machine.

"Next year, that is if you go to bed on time."

She doesn't buy it, of course, but instead changes the subject smoothly

"I can read to you if you want."

And then she doesn't wait for our reply and starts reading. Baz and I exchange glances, but we make ourselves comfortable. Lucy follows the lead of getting comfortable and sits on my belly like on a cushion.

I groan a little but do not remove her. It's like with a cat, once the kid sits on you, you just have to wait until it decides to leave, there is no other alternative.

She props her small bare feet on Baz's thighs. I shoot Baz a look and mouth "so small" His eyes crinkle at the corners. "Small bean!" he mouths back.

Lucy reads until her yawning becomes an obstacle in smooth reading and voice making.

We then lie in the fort.

"Daddies." she says while studying the difference in our skin colour; mine is a tanned almost olive skin, Baz's a pale milky glow, and Luce's a beautiful brown glowing in the fort light.

"You should go to the beach and get a tan. We look too different, people will think you stole me."

"Is that your way of saying you want to go to the sea?"

She grins, her tooth gap making an adorable appearance.

"Yisss!"

****

In the morning Baz goes for a run, while I loiter in bed for as long as Lucy lets me. If I manage to distract her with a good book she lets me be. I strategically plant comic books in places where she will see before reaching our bedroom.

I send Lucy to put the kettle on while I brush my teeth and try to look less creased.

My phone is buzzing from the bedroom and I go to take it.

It's an unknown number.

I reply.

“Mr. Snow?”

“Pich-Snow, yes.”

“This is Redford Green, I am your - ”

“My father’s lawyer, yes, I remember you mister Green.” My heart is beating so fast I can hear it in my ears.

“Mr Snow, David - he… he attempted suicide. The prison guard found him at 4 am today, during the morning patrol.”

My world sways.

“You are his closest relative, so we had to inform you. He’s been stabilized now.”

He waits a few seconds. Good man.

“How?”

“Someone who visited him smuggled him pills.”

So he accepts visitors. Just… just not me.

“There’s an investigation going on. When I have the answers I will let you know.”

Another long silence.

I don’t know what to say.

What is one supposed to say?

“Ok. thank you for calling, Mr. Red.”

He hangs up and I stare at the phone for a long moment.

“The tea is ready!” Lucy yells from the kitchen.

I look at my fingers and they seem wrong. And my tongue feels too big in my mouth. Here is a gnawing ache right behind my sternum. I try to breathe it out but it just gets hotter.

“Daddy, the tea!”

My feet take me to the kitchen. I hear myself saying words, but there is a buzz in my mind that prevents me from comprehending them.

I want Baz. He will rage for me and say that it would have been better if the Mage actually died. He will say that it’s even better that he didn’t because he deserves to be stuck in prison. He will say that David doesn’t deserve a son like me. He will say everything I need to hear. And he will hold

me until I feel warm and loved and wanted again.

Chapter End Notes

2 visions in one chapter? Yes, because I need more Baz and Simon being ok and happy.
By the way, the direction I am taking with Baz's vampirism might be controversial for some people.. So, be warned!)))

Chapter 7

BAZ

The rat is dead and empty in my hands. I discard its lifeless body and lean on the wall.

There is death and then there is *death.* Obviously the rat's state of deadness and my alleged not aliveness are different things.

Surely there is a difference. It's not often that I get to contemplate whether I am dead or not. I know I am living, but am I alive? The Ethereal seems to think I am.

The rat body lies at my feet. I've been staring at it while musing.

What a fucking mess. (Not with the rat. I am a very clean drinker. But with Snow, the Ethereal. The visions... My vampiric nature.)

I sit there and think, and think some more, until my thinking neurons rebel and my body feels stiff and cold. I have to eventually go up.

But I don't want to. I freaked out a little with Snow. I need clarity to function properly. Doubt is what could gnaw at me from inside and off me.

Just when I was beginning to think that maybe Snow and I had *something,* a connection…he drops on me *that.*

He started looking at me like he actually saw me, like he *wanted* to see me. He smiled easily, and there were - suddenly - touches between us… I thought that was all real. A result of danger and troubles bringing people together.

I was wrong, evidently. This was more about what he was experiencing in the visions and not about me and him. "Feelings from a non existent future are overflowing." *Really, Snow?*

Everything has been an echo of what he feels there, then, in the pseudo future. Therefore, none of it has been real.

I feel like an open wound. Stupid me. I had no idea I was falling into hope.

Is it deranged to feel jealous of your own older version?

The things that he described, oh, how they made me yearn...

I fear now I will never get a chance at them. How will I ever know, if it is real? How will I ever know if he wants me or he wants *him?* The one from this pseudo future? If when he looks at me he sees me as I am, or the potential future me? (And should it matter? It does. Damnit. I want him to burn for *me* alone.)

I shake off these thoughts but they keep coming back, like sharks smelling blood. (Like vampires smelling blood!)

And then I think about what the Ethereal said. About denying myself and having to stop that.

I summon another rat and drink it empty.

There. Doesn't look like denying myself to me!

Like I would ever *turn* someone just to drink them. Because surely, that's what she was talking about.

Or she was talking about Snow. Like I am denying myself the possibility of being with him.

My head aches with overthinking.

I go back and pass the hallway vending machine. I magick two chocolate bars with caramel and strawberry filling and slowly take the stairs to our room.

Snow is not there.

There is a note floating in the air: *Went to the Headmaster secret library. Neck not broken.*

My first instinct is to go after him.

But I force myself to stay put.

Stay fucking put.

Instead, I dial Fiona.

I make a plan on how to ask for the spell for stunning the mindspeaker without making her too worried. I eat both chocolates and feel like an asshole.

Night has fallen. I lie on my bed as I am waiting for Fiona to answer and she never does.

The sword from the ceiling is gone. Snow has not returned.

SIMON

I find the secret door fairly fast. There is an old painting of a scary looking pal. You have to boop him on the nose and the painting moves to the side and reveals a door.

I *fine-tooth comb* for ethereals, for future seers, for precognition and other key words I can think of. Every time the spell works. I gather a few books and in the end I have a heap that I don't know what to do with.

I feel overwhelmed - long sentences, fine print, words that I haven't met before. I wish I knew a spell that would make the books into Penny voiced stories.

I sit with the books in my lap and don't know what to do with myself. And with them.

We feel lost - the books and I.

This is the Mage's office. This is where he walks and works (and plots. Why else would he be in prison in this potential future if he didn't plot in the present??).

This is where he suffers because I am such a disappointing Chosen One and probably this is where he tries not to think that I am his biological son. What a shame that must be for him.

I feel bitterness gathering in my mouth whenever I think about that.

I think more than is good for me, thoughts attack me from all sides and I am too exposed to hide from them.

In a present where Baz is angry with me, where the Humdrum hangs as a threat to all Magic, I learn that the Mage is my real father and snoop in his office.

In a future where Baz and I are together, where we defeat the Humdrum together, where we have a family - the Mage almost dies in a prison.

I have this feeling that I had something to do with that. (With him being in a prison.)

I know little about the judiciary system of the mages. We must have something in place, right?

I ***fine-tooth comb*** for prison.

Nothing happens. I am still amazed when I don't blow anything up by using basic spells. It's like I've been trying to ride a faulty bike and kept hitting people, running over pets, and generally being a complete and utter disaster with it. And now, It turns out it wasn't me that couldn't ride it, it was the wrong fucking bike.

So when nothing happens after the spell, I know it's that there are no mentions of prisons in these books, not that I failed. I do not expect the books to turn into combs. Or to blow up.

I get out of the library, make the heavy bundle of books **light as a feather (** successful yet again! **)** and drag my feet towards the exit.

I stop before the door and look back, expecting to see a neon sign with all the answers to my life.

It feels like everything that I am trying not to think about expands inside me, obnoxious, obstinate feelings and questions.

Why hasn't he said anything to me about who I am? Why did he leave me? Why did he take me to

Watford when I was a kid? Why didn't he leave me with the Normals?

And most importantly:

Why did he lie? The last question comes bitter and angry and I unintentionally let magic slip into it.

Even though it is just in my mind I can feel it filling with magic, expanding, and then the Mage's drawer rattles.

His chair is stopping a drawer from opening although it wants to, really badly. I step cautiously back in, approach the drawer and move the chair away. Out of the depths of the drawer comes flying a small notebook. It looks like something you forgot to throw away.- so battered and old. I open it and there are just random scribbles with the pencil. Stuff about inventory in the school, about staff changes. Planning of the school year and notes on individual students. Some pages are filled with gibberish. Maybe the Mage is going cuckoo.

I don't know what to do with it.

I put it back and close the drawer.

The notebook pushes the drawer forward and it flops on the floor.

It obviously wants me to take it.

I sigh. And take it.

Every step that I take makes me feel like I am made of lead. Like my head is too heavy for my neck. Like my feet are shackled while I try to run. The books are most definitely no longer light as a feather.

When I finally reach our room, I feel a thousand years old.

I can hear a broken cassette replaying in my mind:

He attempted to commit suicide.

Someone who visited him smuggled him pills.

Thank you for calling, Mr Red.

(Redford! His name was Redford, not Red! How silly.)

I push the door to our room open. There is a soft light coming from outside. The moon is shining through clouds. I close the curtains and it becomes dark. It is befitting.

I make another list:

1.In this future, my father almost dies.

2.He doesn’t want to see me.

3.Me. Me specifically.

4.(Not in the present, not in the future. I am inconsequential unless I am on Humdrum business)

I think I must be doing lists wrong.

I know none of the future stuff is real (yet), but it feels awfully real. Why can’t thoughts and rationality control feelings and emotions? Why can’t we just switch off caring?

There is a yearning for solace and comfort in my chest. I want to lay my head on someone’s lap and have cool long fingers comb my hair and whisper loving nonsense. I want to cry and be held while crying.

I want…

Who am I kidding... I want Baz.

In the vision, if it hadn’t stopped, I would have got that from Baz, and I would have had this need fulfilled. Comfort received. Move on! Gestalt closed.

But I didn't get there, didn’t get to the Baz comforting me part. I woke up here, in this *now* . Where Baz is angry with me and I don't know why and I need him to not be angry with me.

I want to stop feeling like an open wound.

I put down the books, right there, on the floor near the windows, and drag my lead feet to the bathroom. I somehow manage to get undressed. My limbs are made of melting clay. I am made of sticky clay on the outside and heavy lead on the inside.

Baz is in the room. Sleeping. So close. So not mine.

I turn on the shower and because my body parts are so heavy I give in to gravity and slide down the wall into a sitting position, I let my head fall back to the wall and let water mix with my tears.

I don’t know what to do with this strange pain of a paternal rejection so systematic that it feels like a slow-motion loss, unfolding for years in a parallel dimension.

It echoes loudly in my reality. I don't know what hurts more - the situation in the future or the one in the now.

I don't know where to tuck any of it, how to make any of it go away. None of it fits in my usual mind boxes. I think the place for hiding the boxes is also full.

I look at my painted nails and I start chipping the paint away. I want to destroy something beautiful, to align myself with what is happening to me.

The paint doesn't go easily and in the end I am left with more than half of it still on, but ragged.

It has been spoiled, no longer perfect. No longer pretty.

Good.

I feel good enough to stand up, dry myself and through the cold of the room I go to Baz's bed.

I was aiming for my bed, I swear! But something in me whined, and whined, and pulled... and here I am.

He is lying on his side, facing the wall, with his back to me.

"Baz."

"What, Snow." he sounds tired.

I am tired too.

"Baz."

I don't know how to say it, it probably will disgust him, my neediness. Just like it disgusts the Mage.

How do I explain to him that he seems the only source of solace in a world of fuckedupedness?

He sighs heavily and half turns around to me, twisting his upper body to face me.

I know he sees me well enough. (He's a vampire.) I barely make out his features. (I am a human and the moon just hid behind clouds.)

"Do you mind if I lie with you for a while?"

My voice is small and pained, as if someone kicked me just now. My hands are fisted in my pajama bottoms.

"It sounds like a lewd proposal from a historical romance." He says haughtily, but he scoots closer to the wall and turns his back on his side. Making room for me.

"Get in and don't let heat escape. I've been hoarding it since 11 pm."

I slip underneath the mountain of blankets and am enveloped by warmth and cedar and bergamot

and the numbness in me thaws a little. And then a little more.

“Baz. Something bad happened.” I press my forehead to his back and try not to break.

“Something bad always happens, Snow.”

Silence stretches like sticky old glue. I finally get enough courage to utter:

“Will you kill me if I put my arms around you?”

His sigh is monumental.

“Why?”

“Why what?” I am more confused than usually.

“Why would you do that?”

“Because I need this ...you. I need you right now.” my voice breaks but I dare not move. My forehead is still on his back. His breath hitches.

“Okay” he says and I sigh in relief, scooting closer, wrapping one arm around him, pulling us closer. I don’t know what to do with the arm I am lying on, so I slide it underneath his pillow.

I am the big spoon and he is a small spoon made of happy memories.

I cling.

My fingers curl in his shirt and I press my face in his back, trying to stop myself from hurting.

He sighs and turns on his back. His movements are abrupt, inelegant. But when he touches me he is gentle. He takes my arm out from underneath the pillow

“This will get numb in 2 minutes” he informs me. Then he pulls me forward, to him, and I fall gratefully on his chest. My arm immediately finds its way around his middle, and my head knows the place where it belongs, where it fits.

He holds me. His fingers are splayed on my arms and shoulders.

“What happened, Snow?” he asks quietly.

“The Mage tried to commit suicide in prison.”

He holds me tighter.

“In the visions.”

“Yeah, I figured.”

“I think that’s not the bad thing that happened. The bad thing is that he refuses to see me and I keep hoping he will. The hoping part is what makes it bad. And the fact that he was ready to die without ever seeing me. And I am his son.”

I don’t say anything else. I am grateful he doesn’t ask anything more.

“He’s an asshole.”

I nod my head against him and feel better. How is this possible?

“His actions are not a reflection of you, Snow.” his voice holds barely contained anger. “In the visions or in real life. They are a reflection of him. Not you.”

I hold on tighter. He lets me.

I lie in Baz’s arms while he brushes patterns on my skin, soothing my pain. I nuzzle in his shirt and move up until my face is buried in his neck. I breathe him in shamelessly. He makes a muted sound in the back of his throat. I lie still, waiting to see if he says anything. His fingers move over my skin in a gentle caress and I relax into him. Finally.

Finally.

I drape a leg over his hip.

I minimize all possible distance between us. The distance holds risks, and confusion, and he is so solid, so here, so real.

I grab onto him, desperate to find my ground.

Baz is my anchor. And I don't let go.

BAZ

Snow is practically lying on me. His fingertips have shifted the shirt fabric up and are tracing patterns on my bare skin - timid, shy exploring hand that is leaving a trail of fire. I can’t keep my own fingers still as they map the contours of his arms, shoulder, neck, jaw.

There are touches between us again.

There is no way I am going to sleep tonight. I can’t let a moment be forsaken to the unconsciousness of sleep. What a waste that would be.

“Baz?” he speaks against my neck. One syllable feels like a kiss. His breath is hot against my skin.

We need to peel off a few hundred blankets off my usual construction. Snow brought with him several degrees of heat. Staying warm no longer feels like a challenge, but like a given.

“Baz?”

Did I not answer so that he can speak again? Did I want to feel his lips move on my skin again?

Yes, absolutely. Am I ashamed? Not even a little.

"What, Snow?" I sound soft, sleepy, like I am melting ice-cream. (Does this mean I want him to lick me?)

"Can we play pretend for a moment?" He bends the leg that's on mine until his knee is on my groin. I bite my lip to keep from making any sounds. His palm is hot on my stomach. It feels divine. I scratch the back of his head, where his hair is short and yet so soft. He makes a sound like a purr.

"Don't we always?" My voice sounds too loud in the night. "You pretend to be a good little soldier. I pretend to be your sworn enemy." I don't mean to sound bitter but I do. His hand stills. So does mine.

He hoists himself up on his elbow and looks at me. He wears a frown and a halo of curls.

"No. Not like that. I don't like, nor want that anymore."

He goes back where he was, in the crook of my neck, and lies still, it feels like he is bracing himself. He presses his face into me. Warmth pools in the center of my palms, electricity zipping through me from the press of his lips and the feel of his breath.

"Are you wiping your snotty nose on my neck, Snow?"

He snorts and I swear I feel something wet.

"Sorry, I wasn't, until you said it, I swear!" he uses the top of his shirt to wipe my neck. He fumbles with the fabric and then puts some space between his nose and my neck.

I miss his warmth immediately and regret having said anything.

His fingers finally slide fully underneath the fabric and my insides take a tumble.

Everything stirs inside me. *What are you doing, Snow?*

Would he be like this if he didn't have the residual feelings from his vision trips?

I can't help but ask myself. The thought is bitter and angry.

"Can we pretend that you are not mad at me, and that I am not … not the Mage's heir - "

"I'm not… That's not why I am mad at you, Snow."

"Why then?" he whines. "I can't go through this night if you're mad at me for something I can't change. So let's pretend, ok? Let's pretend that we're ok."

I hold my breath and look for my strength to send him to the devil. I fail to find it.

"Ok, Snow, let's pretend." I give in and my heart breaks in two. Because I don't want to pretend. *I want it to be true.*

We lie like that, not talking, not sleeping. Stealing touches from each other.

After a while, Snow brings his head lower on my chest, the skin on my neck becomes cold instantly, missing his touch.

“Good night, Baz.” His removes his hands from underneath mu shirt. I catch one hand and guide it back on my rib cage. He stays there.

“Good night, Snow.”

We sleep in each other's arms and it doesn’t feel like we’re pretending at all.

SIMON

It feels like a reversed deja vu. I wake up lying on Baz, draped on him like a tablecloth that is about to slide off the table.

Some time during the night I took off my shirt - too hot.

Baz is awake, his fingers are brushing maddening circles on my back.

“You undressed.”

“My body makes more heat if it knows it doesn’t have a loophole. Shirts are loopholes. Cheat codes. Take them away and I am a thermal station.”

“I noticed.” his hand stills and I move my shoulder blades underneath them, like a cat demanding the petting to continue.

“How are you feeling today?” His voice is like sandpaper. It makes goosebumps appear on my skin.

“Better.” Is he asking so that he knows if he can stop touching me now that I won't explode in tears? Or asking because he wants to know? Today I feel lighter. I will not lie to him so that I can get more touches.

He resumes touching me, tentative at first, then bolder, and I curl around him.

As long as he touches me like this, I am content.

I feel under a spell, I crane my neck and plant a kiss underneath his jaw. His head falls back and I kiss his throat. Small closed mouth kisses that suddenly are not enough. His fingers keep moving on my back, but a little more aggressively, more demanding. Like unsaid questions. Urgent. Urgent questions.

I open my mouth and lick his skin, suckling at it. He moans and then moves away enough to see me.

“Are we still pretending, Snow?” he sounds out of breath.

I panic and nod, “Yes.”

Apparently, it is the wrong thing to say because he pushes me away and sits up. He looks at the wall and then at the ceiling. His breath is heavy, like he is trying to calm himself. I lie quietly in the bed that smells so much like him, my heart is beating so fast, like it’s trying to out run something.

I feel like there is a knot of fire in my throat.

“I am sorry, Baz.” I sit up, sitting at the edge of the bed, my back to him. “I should have asked if you are okay with me touching you like that. I just...”

“Snow you are so daft, sometimes I wonder, how have you survived until now?” he almost growls. I am surprised at his fervor and I look back at him.

“What do you think happened just now, you incredible ginormous ninny?”

“What do you mean, what? I...” I feel myself blushing furiously. “I kissed your neck without your permission and pissed you off.” I get out of the bed and look for my shirt, busying myself. It has fallen underneath his bed so I bend to get it. It’s all a great way of not facing him, really.

“Now take a moment and replay what happened, and what I asked and what you replied - replay it all in your head and see if maybe something clicks in that thing you call a brain.” I stand up and hold my shirt like a club in my hand - I would very much like to smack him with it. He keeps finding ways to insult me and I am angry at myself for not coming up with counter insults. I just can’t be bothered. I don’t *want* to insult him.

He crosses his arms, waiting. I think a little.

“You didn’t like that I said we were still pretending.” Something is starting to take shape in my heart. Hope?

“Yes, you clueless git. Why? Why do you think that makes me angry?”

I swallow hard. He looks ready to punch me. I am starting to doubt my guessing abilities.

“Because you wanted it to be not pretending?” I make an attempt nonetheless.

“Another word for that would be ‘real’. Yes.” he grinds his teeth. “I want to kick you so much right now.” he jumps off his bed and runs an angry hand through his hair - which is a lovely mess in the morning.

“You fancy me?” I ask in awe.

“I wouldn’t use that word, but yea, something like that.” he admits angrily putting on a sweater. He adds a layer of socks, takes them off angrily and then casts **warm as toast** on them before putting them on.

I open my mouth to say something, but even though he is not looking at me directly he sees me and stops me with one hand, “No. Don’t bother. I’m not sure what I can deal with right now. I’m going to the kitchen to eat something. Don’t follow me, give me 30 minutes to eat without your questions, which I am sure are bubbling inside you right now, threatening to explode and overflow in this room. Like the feelings you mentioned from this pseudo future that make everything you

feel here and now null. Cheers”

He leaves with a bang. I stare at the closed door. *He fancies me. NOW. not in the future. But NOW. Merlin! It has started!!!*

I wash, get dressed, and listen to more music on Baz’s ipod.

A lady Gaga song starts. *Show me your teeth!* Says Gaga in her song and I think this could have been the soundtrack to all my stalking of Baz.

It's a good 30 minutes after Baz left and I think he's had enough time and space and that I too deserve to eat. Just as I am reaching for the doorknob, I notice my hand is shimmering blue. I stare at it closely and notice finer versions of the snowflakes-moth-like creatures swarming around me. I get on the floor and lean on the door, just as the vision starts.

It is a weekend in which we take a trip to the sea side. I arrange for a place to stay overnight. A nice air bnb right next to the beach.

It’s late May and the weather is crazy - yesterday we had a heat wave, today it’s cloudy and chilly.

Baz uses every occasion to point out that we as Mages should have got involved in the climate problem long ago.

“My knight with shining fangs, saving the world. Again.”

He pops his fangs at me and sticks his tongue at me.

So mature. I roll my eyes.

"I am serious. I admire how you always take responsibility head on, how you would carry the weight of the world if it let you. How you are incredibly good at good at it.

I know it still embarrasses him when I throw praise at him like this. I think I learned this from Lucy. She goes through life openly showering people she loves with compliments, praise, adoration. "Daddy, this is the best toast EVER. You are a great father," she told me the other day when I made her french toast. It was an ok toast, but she liked it and she let me know.

In the evening, we have a guest over. It’s a girl in her late twenties. We eat pasta with tomato sauce and basil leaves. For dessert I make pancakes on oat milk, with vanilla extract and strawberry jam. The girl’s name is Tash.

I hoard Lucy to the bathroom, she has sand in her hair, in her ears, in her belly button and she doesn’t let me magick it out - “Pointing a magickal sword at your own daughter! Tsk, tsk!” she chides and shakes her head at me.

“I can make it invisible if it works for you!” I offer but she refuses.

She waves her fingers at me. “ I can manage like a Normal, thank you very much.” - which means she’ll make a mess in the bathroom, somehow wet ALL the towels, and then she will demand a board game evening while getting the sniffles and making Baz magick them away.

I leave her to it and go back to the dining room.

The girl - Tash - has her head to the side and Baz is attached to her neck. His lips are curled back and he is drinking from her.

“How do you like your future, boy?” her voice is in my head but I can’t see her.

She floats from the ceiling, creeping me out. She stops. Her alien eyes are studying me.

“I want it to stop.” I tell her. I just saw Baz turn someone?? That sounds wrong, I wasn't angry or shocked, or disgusted, I was ok with what was happening, I wouldn’t be ok with turning people! But I don’t want to see and feel and experience any of it anymore. I think humans aren’t made to experience two lives at once. At least I am not good at it.

‘I haven’t finished with you, mageling.“

“Then give me another, another future! Something without Baz!”

“Oh no. You asked for this one. I chose carefully. There is one future in which you end up a dragon. And that was not as unexpected as this one.”

“How can I be a dragon? I am a mage!”

“Not in that future you’re not.”

She chuckles in that aerial way of hers.

“What else do you need from me? I’ve been doing magic, you get to see the *strings* . Now what?”

“Yes, that was helpful. Pulling at one string with the words and the sword, and at the other string with your mind. That was good. To learn more, I need to dissect the strings of magic inside you.”

“What? No! That sounds bad.”

“Pain is not bad when it is a necessity.”

"It is if you ask the receiver of pain!" I protest.

She doesn't provide another answer, but looks at me through lowered eyelashes. Her eyelashes remind me of icicles gathering on trees.

“Can’t you wait until my consciousness is in the visions?” I try to negotiate a deal in which I am somehow not there to receive the pain when it is delivered.

“No, you need to be here so that your magic stirs. Your body is the vessel for magic, but your consciousness is the wielder.”

With that she disappears.

Nothing happens. Could she have changed her mind?

I wait in a fighting stance, my sword by my side as a weapon. Really, it's reflex after all this time of fighting.

And then I feel it. A small tug starting in my core.

Like when you are a kid and you have a loose tooth and someone's pulling it out.

A tug like that. But worse.

What would Penny do?

My mind asks frantically.

She would make it all go away somehow.

The tug repeats itself and now it's tugging at a tooth that doesn't want to be pulled. The ache is long and deep.

The next tug is about ripping something attached to the core of my being. The pain splices through me and I stagger.

What would Penny tell me *to do?*

And then I know.

I raise my sword, hold his face in my head and shout with magic: **Quickly! Call 911!**

BAZ

American culture is fascinating. It extends beyond borders and Normals across the world learn specific phrases that ring true in their minds. They wander in their consciousness, in their culture.

Like the emergency service 911. There was this speed survey in which you had to continue the sentence, and after *Quickly, call* ---- 78% of non american people added 911. Even though their emergency number is completely different.

So yea. I don't know why I am thinking that as I am doing breathing exercises to clear my mind. But the thoughts just appear in my mind.

My phone rings and I answer it, the number is unknown. Could be Fiona from another phone.

Maybe that's why she hasn't answered until now - she got her phone lost or stolen. Or knowing Fi, she smashed it herself.

Out of my mouth, the words just tumble: " 911 what is your emergency?" (in an American accent!!! Which, honestly, I would *never!*)

"Baz! Help! I'm..." I hear Snow's voice and then he screams. It is a scream of pain and hurt and the line goes dead and it takes me less than a second to put two and two together.

I grab my wand and run at full speed.

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

This chapter is important to me. Be kind to it!)))

See the end of the chapter for more notes

BAZ

The *Quickly call 911* spell works only if the person you are calling for help knows about it. We were in year 5 when I wrote an essay on *American Internationalized Phrases that can be magicked* . Quite brilliant, if I say so myself.

I read it aloud in class as it won the first prize in the school contest. I can't believe Snow remembered that. (His submission was shite, obviously.)

Just before I reach the room, I smell the smoke. I thrust myself in the room. Snow is crouched on the floor, in the middle of the room. He is growling like an animal and sparks fly around him, the air is thick with his magic leaking out.

"Baz, leave. I'll go off." He says through gritted teeth.

I assess the situation. There is not one single scenario in which I abandon him like this. You can't cast a 911 emergency spell unless it is an actual emergency. I can't leave anyone, let alone *him* in an emergency.

I point my wand at him **Hold fast, suck it up, stay cool!** I throw the spells at him one after another.

"Arrrgh" he groans and his magic turns to sparks, making the blanket catch on fire.

He stomps at it with his hand and growls at me, "Get out! You're flammable!"

A few more sparks right and left, some reach the desk with the books and notebooks and papers.

"**Raining cats and dogs!** " I cast on the ceiling and it starts raining. Better one wet spell than many **make a wish**-es.

Water pours down on us. The little fires sizzle and die.

"Hold fast, suck it up, stay cool!" How many more of these do I have in me?

"What's happening?" I ask. The smell of smoke is disappearing, but is still there, still pungent. The spells are helping. I've heard Snow mutter them under his nose every time I rile him up enough to

almost make him go off with my teasing and probing and pushing. (also known as my fucked up way of flirting)

“She is dissecting my magic,” he says when it seems he can finally take a normal breath. “Fuck! How can she do that?” his face twists and his body convulses. He swears over and over again.

“Does it hurt?”

He doubles over. Stupid question.

“Like a motherfucker.” I think he means to grin at me, but he bares his teeth like a trapped deranged animal instead.

Sweat glistens on his forehead, his bronze curls stick to it. I want to take it all away - all his pain. To bear it myself.

“Can you do anything?” I ask quietly, he is the greatest mage there is after all.

“Yea.” he shoots me a pained glance. “I can try not to die.”

I grit my teeth and control my facial expressions. Inside I am raging with uselessness.

“Can *I* do anything?”

“Yea, send me to sleep, Baz.”

He is frowning intensely, eyes shut and lip curled up. I think that talking costs him a lot of effort.

“You sure?”

“Come on, Baz.” He opens his eyes to plead with me. I think that the grimace on his face is supposed to resemble a smile.

“Magic or fist?” If this is what I can do, I will. Simple as that.

He is shaking his head - a subtle subtle shake. Like it hurts to move too much.

“Anathema.” He manages to say in between groans.

How can he remember *that* when his body is contorting with pain?

How can he still be the one to protect, even when he needs protecting most?

I help him out of the room, my arm around him, carrying his weight on my shoulder, and then, when we are outside in the hallway, I repeat my question.

“Use magic. Although I owe you one punch, you might want to collect..” His voice is pained, but he powers through. He even manages a strained chuckle.

I grin at him. Stupid boy.

How I love him.

“**Knock your lights out!**” I cast.

A backlash of magick slams me to the floor. I hit my head on the floor but nothing too bad. Snow is beside me in a matter of a second.

I see bluish snowflakes swarming around Snow’s head. Then they fall down on his clothes.

“Baz! Baz!” he cradles my head and even though his features are tensed there is such precious gentleness in his eyes that I swallow a knot in my throat. It feels unfathomable that I - a vampire - am at the receiving end of such gentleness.

I, a vampire, deserving of gentleness?! *Also a mage, a boy. Just a boy.* (I don’t know whose voice is this, but it is so tiny it’s like a memory of an echo.)

Somewhere in the back of my head a small fragile question (in the same voice!) asks: what kind of people am I surrounded by, if receiving gentleness feels strange, unfathomable even?

I have no time for reflective questions though, I have time for Snow.

I should tell him that I am ok, but I let him check on me for a while longer. It seems to distract him from his own pain. (And I like being the object of his care. Sue me.)

“I’m fine.” I admit finally, sitting up and leaning on the closest wall. “She’s in your head, right?”

“She’s wreaking havoc, Baz, she keeps triggering my going off mechanisms, I feel like a ticking bomb with a broken clock.”

“Do you want me to knock you out? Physically?” Apparently the Ethereal doesn’t want Snow’s consciousness to leave the building, so she blocked my spell.

He shakes his head. “I guess...” he wipes away the sweat that keeps pooling at the corners of his eyes. “No, I don’t want you to hit me. Not yet.”

I nod. I push down on my frustration - how can I have nothing to offer, now when he needs me? I am useless.

“I want you to hold me,” he confesses and tenderness washes me through. There is something after all.

I drag him carefully to me, his back on my chest, head resting on my shoulder. We are both wet from the raining spell, and I am starting to shiver. He is emanating heat even through clingy wet fabric. I could cast something to dry us off, but I have an idea and would rather direct my magic to something that might take his pain away.

“I want to try another spell, a more gentle one, which might work.” I say and fight my teeth from clattering. A stray snowflake moth melts from my touch.

“I don’t want her to hurt you again,” he snuggles into me, sharing his heat, making me warm inside. “You’re already making it better. A little. But better still.”

“She reacted only to the combative spell, I managed to magick you into calming down without any backlash, remember? Those were protective, calming spells. Maybe I can do something of the same kind.”

He doesn’t say anything, but I hear him gritting his teeth when another wave of pain hits. I can hear his heart beat running wildly in his chest. I can smell him sweating more, even though his clothes are wet and the hallway is cool. I don’t think he is up to another trip to the room.

I open my mouth and start singing **Hush Little baby** infusing it with magic. One arm is draped across his chest, keeping him close and steady, with the other hand I wave the wand as I sing.

When I have finished the song. He is sleeping in my arms. The smell of smoke is completely gone. I am drained, running very low on magic. I don’t think I ever felt like that. So drained and so satisfied. I did something good.

And then I notice her.

She is standing half in the hall, half still in our room, or *in* the wall, depends how thick the wall is. As if she used the wall as a door and forgot to close it. It’s a reminder of her ethereal nature. The blue mist is swarming angrily around her ankles.

“Your kind is older than his, do you know that, Bloddrekka? It’s as old as the first age of men. As old as the age of my youth.”

“You would win trivia night, Ethereal.” I smirk at her. “What of that?” My voice is seeping irony and venom. The best combination.

“The age of speaking mages will fade, but your kind will always roam the world.” she speaks almost fondly. It makes no sense, it makes me angry to be at the receiving end of whatever seems like fondness from a monster. And then she seems sad. “You will know loss like no one else, with the burden of eternal life placed upon your mageling shoulders." She confuses me even further, that hint of sadness not leaving her voice. "Use it for knowledge and the burden will ease.”

“I didn’t ask for a history lesson nor a cheap future telling. If you are so old that you precede vampires and men, why is there no mention of you anywhere? Maybe you are not as grand as you imagine. We searched for Vissa the Ethereal and there was none!” I am hoping to get some information of her. I am not thrilled about having to fight someone I know so little about and someone that yields so little search results. It was frustrating that even learning her name gave us nothing.

She looks at me with her eyes so blue they seem to be made of a blue iceberg.

“I was not born Vissa. Nor was I born an ethereal. I made myself.” She sounds proud. “I changed myself. I reached out for knowledge.” She peers at me through her icicle lashes and I shiver. “I see desire for knowledge in you as well - perhaps you will choose a familiar path as me. When the Mageling dies. Old and wrinkled. Weak and useless.”

She is not giving me anything except a headache and empty words.

“I thought you could see the future? Why the uncertainty?”

“I can get *glimpses* in variants of futures. I can offer them to others.” She cocks her head and her toga moves in shimmering waves. I realize that her toga is in fact made of skin, like dragon skin.

“You would make a good ethereal. When the time comes, I will be inclined to teach you even, sweet Bloddrekka.”

Ok. This is enough. Her voice is wistful. The last thing I need is to be enrolled in her cult.

“Tell me what do you want with *him* ? Can’t you torture some other mage?” I know Snow would not like me offering someone else for magical dissection, but I don’t care about some other mage. I care about *him.* I make sure to pour ice in my voice since the Ethereal seems to like it so much, she's literally surrounded by it.

She chuckles in my head and it feels like dry wind and dust storms. “There is no one like him.”

“There is some other guy, pretty strong too. Humdrum? Might go by other name. Full nickname Insidious Humdrum. Maybe you could pay *him* a visit?” And spare me and Snow a final battle. Free Snow from the Mage’s shackles.

Again with the wheezing dusty chuckle, “That is not a mage! It comes from the holes and lives through them!”

I want to ask more, she might be our enemy, but she is also a source of knowledge. However, she seems suddenly tired with our conversation. She raises her hand and twists it right and left, watching attentively the swarms of ice blue moths following her movement. A few fall to the ground, dead - or really tired.

“What exactly do you want with Snow?”

“With him? Nothing.”

She steps back in the wall - like she just peeked to say hi and remembered her oven wasn’t turned off - and I hear in my head: “With his magic? *Everything.”*

A handful of snowflake moths drop to the ground like a snowfall during a quiet winter day. I stomp at them with my foot, where I reach them. They melt under my angry stomping and wiping.

I take my phone and furiously dial Fiona again. She keeps dodging my calls. I leave an angry message about her causing her beloved nephew to die of an angry aneurysm and then try to remember the spell she told me about that time when she offed a mind speaker who wasn’t very material himself.

It doesn’t help that I was 10, and she was quite pissed as she was boasting about it, so I was also worried about Father not learning about how she drank in front of me. But I feel the spell evading me just as I am about to grasp it.

SIMON

For the second time in less than a day I wake up in Baz's arms. I am still wet from the spell and he is actively shivering, otherwise I would be basking in the feeling for a longer time.

"Baz. She's gone." My head feels light, I can breathe in. I call my sword and magic stirs in me, licking its wounds, but there.

"Yea, she stopped for a chat with me."

We stand up stiffly. Both of us, holding onto each other, finding support.

He takes my hand and lets go only when we enter the room. (I wish he didn't let go at all. But the logistics of changing clothes doesn't allow for much hand holding.)

I am sad that I have to part with Baz's hoodie (well, now my hoodie - I am not giving it back. like ever. It says The **property of Baz Pitch** on the tag, and I know it is silly, but it makes me feel fuzzy inside) and yet happy to change the stale smelling wrinkled clothes (I do it in the bathroom and he in the room, which is a tragedy really. such a missed opportunity to gawk at him shamelessly...)

Baz magicks the room dry and collapses on the bed, feet on the floor, arms to the sides - like a gorgeous exhausted star fish of a human (vampire) that decided to rest.

He eyes me from half closed lids. Like a cat pretending not be hunting. I don't know what to do with myself, so I fidget around with the stuff on the desk then on my bed. There's an air of awkwardness around us. One could cut it with a knife. It's so thick.

It's like we probably should have been after he licked his blood off my face or I kissed his neck like a dog happy to see his human.

I know I should tell him about the latest vision, but I don't want him to get defensive. It feels like every time I slip into a vision some new info piles up on me and I have to decide whether to deal with it now or put it in a box for later. And if you remember, the brain box storage is quite full at the moment. I will just have to shove this vision's revelations somewhere in there or blurt it to Baz in the most unceremonious way, probably whilst declaring my undying love for him. I wonder what would freak him out more - the vampire thing from the vision or my declaration?

BAZ

I peer at him as he bites at his lip, munches on it really, deep in thought. Snow thinking is a sign for trouble. I imagine standing up and pulling him against me on the bed and telling him about my feelings. That I don't just fancy the git, I love him to the point of no return.

SIMON

I don't know if I am allowed, but I go and lie beside him. In the same position. His starfish left hand ends up underneath my head and the back of my right hand rests on his chest. I can feel the waves of his breath.

For a long while we just lie there, two starfish boys.

Afterwards, after we've done the lying down and the tension sort of subsided and the awkwardness forgot it had to surround us, we get up and sit on his bed as the best place to strategize., seeing as it is Baz's bed and he is wicked good at strategy and plotting.

Baz also provides us with a bag of chips for better brain function. I am not sure about the better brain function, but I am not one to say no to food.

He tells me that he can try to find his aunt's spell that would stop the Ethereal from dunking me into a lifelong of misery skipping from my real life to one that doesn't exist, might not exist, probably won't exist.

He says it was some kind of song lyric. He says he has been browsing the web for catchy songs, hoping to remember it.

"Effectively, the spell traps the mind speaker into the mind of the person that she's speaking to."

"That sounds ominous."

"Well. Maybe. But there is a second spell connecting to the first one. Stage two involves neutralizing the ethereal. For good."

"Erm… You mean killing her?"

"Yes." He seems flustered.

"Why didn't you say so?" I am annoyed.

"I have a feeling you'd be too sensitive to the word. And evidently I was right." He purses his mouth into a perfectly kissable pout and I look away. Not the time.

"Can we not kill a god-like creature just over a future vision gone wrong?" I did agree to it, after all. She is not carrying the entire 100% of all blame. He looks at me like I've gone mad. There is a crumb of the potato chips that's stuck on the corner of his mouth and he doesn't notice it. It's driving me mad. I imagine leaning into him and using my mouth to remove it.

"She is effectively torturing you." He says. He is not technically wrong, but….

"For the sake of science, ya'know, aka knowledge!" I don't know why I am defending her. She is a monster without scruples.

(Merlin help me! The potato chip crumb is still there. Beckoning me. I could lick at the corner of his mouth. But he would notice. Surely he would. I am not sure I am allowed to randomly lick food off Baz's face. Although… he did lick blood off mine, so… I've no idea where that leaves us.)

"Snow, get off your high noble horse, you can't ride it well enough." Baz is animated as he almost glares at me. He wipes his mouth with the back of his hand and I am disappointed I didn't get to help him out. With my mouth.

His next question distracts me from the crumb-on-upper-lip-may-I-lick-it-please scenario. "Since when do you care about butchering monsters?" he demands.

Since realizing that not everything I don't understand is a monster.

I used to think he was a monster.

"She said you could go *mad* . Do you want to go mad?"

“I am not very sane as it is, Baz.”

He ignores me.

“Do you want your mind to splinter and shatter and leak all over Watford and the magical world? Imagine what would happen to your powers then. You’d be a deranged walking ticking bomb. And who would deal with the humdrum? The Mage? bah!”

He stops himself, eyes wide.

“You can mention him, I am not that fragile. I think… I think I mourned him repeatedly in the life of the visions, it felt like I was preparing or already prepared to let him go. I just didn’t know how to cope with that while here, in this present. And no.”

“No what?” He looks like he wants to wring my neck. I scoot a few centimeters away. He still could reach me to get my neck wrung, but at least I would have an advantage of a few more centimeters. “No” is not an argument, you sodding nightmare!”

“No, as in - not the Mage.” I reclaim the few centimeters and scoot closer. Who was I kidding, I can't keep my distance. Our knees are almost touching. “ *You* could defeat the Humdrum.”

“Oh, pish!” he waves his hand at me, dismissive.

“I mean it,!" I sound a little too defensive maybe. "I’ve seen it. Or at least the proof of it. You said it in the vision. We did it together. Now, you wouldn’t doubt your own honesty would you? I mean, you from the present would, but I wouldn’t, since in the visi - ”

“Well that’s bollocks.” He interrupts, impatient with my talk about the visions. Still a sore spot I see. “You can’t take *yourself* out of the equation and assume that *I* will do *all* of the work. First of all, that’s awfully convenient, innit, Snow? Pass all shitty responsibility to Baz while being a bloody martyr. Secondly, if we’re honest here, my input in defeating the Humdrum was probably a brilliant inspiring or threatening speech to get you to do it. Kind of like now. ”

I laugh at that. He is so fiery, his face lights up when he is in defending Simon mode. He’s usually so composed, and always so cool but now he is all fire. For me. It zings something in my chest.

“How about we figure out a way not to kill but to incapacitate her?” I tug at the fabric of his sleeve. He is wearing a burgundy sweater and I am wearing another one of his. He said he couldn’t - and wouldn’t - see me in the school uniform anymore. And I didn’t fight it, really.

“And then have the Ethereal eternally hunt us? No thanks? Next brilliant idea.” He glances at my fingers in his sleeve and sucks the corner of his lower lip inside, biting it once and then releasing it.

I am temporarily short circuited.

“Snow?”

“Oh yes!” I shake myself and try very hard not to blush. “How about we put a pin in the killing idea and try to find an alternative?”

He rolls his eyes

“Simon.” He never calls me Simon. Like it’s so rare it’s a never.

“She will not relent until she *understands* the magic inside you. Sometimes understanding is about

deconstructing something and then never putting it back together."

He peels my fingers from his sleeve and intertwines them with his. He addresses our hands when speaking, not looking up at me. "I've seen it in her eyes. All means are acceptable for her goal as long as she believes her goal to be righteous. And she does. I recognize that in her because it is… " he swallows hard and looks behind his shoulder, as if expecting someone there. "Because it is very well a Pitch trait. And if she has to torture you for eternity... she will do it. I am not going to stand by and watch her though." He says the last part while taking my hand with both of his and placing it on his thigh.

"I don't like the idea of killing a God."

"She's not a God. She's a godlike creature. An Ethereal, yes. But also a mind speaker. We can take her." He is playing with my fingers, traces patterns on my palms, bends and unbends my fingers. I can barely think.

"That's not why I don't like the idea. I just." My palm is burning with his touches. "I don't want the retribution that would come afterwards."

"Since when are you afraid of retribution?" he exclaims. "Since when are you thinking through? You are fucking Simon Snow, your first instinct is to run into battle headfirst - "

"Not when *your* safety and *your* wellbeing is at stake as well."

"That's not you talking." he curls my fingers in a fist and shifts my hand to the bed. Sitting on his palms now, like a naughty kid trying to control his urges. It occurs to me that maybe he too can't keep his distance.

He continues with his madness: "Not really you. That's the overflowing - " I clamp a hand on his mouth, startling him to silence. I want to strangle him right now. And not in a sexy way.

"Shut up. I regret telling you that specific thing. Gah, you're like a dog with a bone. Maybe the visions did trigger something. But you know what, Baz, that's how the universe works - cause and effect, baby. It doesn't make feelings less real just because I caught them from a vision." I want to punch a wall, he makes me so angry! "It could have been a dream. A magnificent sex dream that would have made me look at you differently!"

I keep going, bringing my hands in the air in a gesture of despair. "So this resentment that you're holding on to - That is unfair! YOU are being unfair! This future visions are not a love spell - a love spell would render feelings false! But it's not! Anything could have been the cause of me stopping for a second to think, *oh hey, maybe my obsession with Baz is not about him plotting but about me wanting to* shag *him!* "

His eyes widen to surprise and wonderment. My breathing is laboured like I have been running circles. And I feel like I have. Running circles around my feelings for Baz. Not realizing that I was constantly wanting to hit him because I couldn't let myself hit *on* him!

And then I just can't take it anymore. I push myself off of his bed while he remains cross-legged to gape at me.

"I am angry and hungry. I will say it and you'll mock me: I'm HANGRY, Baz. You filled your stomach already and mine is growling! I have been attacked by a whacko goddess - Godlike creature - that wants to do a vivisection on my magic and before the next vision sends me for a

couple of days into another reality, or before she comes back with a better scalpel, I would like to eat. Food never doubts me. Food is never unreasonable. Food doesn't make me want to throttle anyone! Food doesn't accuse me of not enjoying it just because I also eat in visions!"

I am all worked up. About food. And about Baz.

I almost kick the door open, but then remember it's a 'pull' from this side.

"Are you coming? Or do you want me to humpty dumpty down the stairs when another vision hits?"

He is quiet all the way down the stairs, but somewhere in the middle, he takes my hand in his. All gusto leaves my chest. He intertwines our fingers. I hold on tight. We do not speak. My palm pulses with warmth, it's like we cradle a ball of electricity in between our palms. He presses our clasped hands to his mouth.

It feels like an apology.

I swallow my heart back into my chest and try to readjust all my organs that just flip flopped from his touch.

In the kitchen I declare I will make pancakes and he chokes on laughter. I remember the recipe and the steps from the vision. We scramble all the ingredients from the pantry. I cook, he theorizes about the Ethereal and I listen. I don't really feel like talking about her right now. I feel like eating.

When I am done cooking I take out two plates. I arrange the pancakes and add the strawberry jam on top. They look nice.

"Two plates."

"Yes. Two plates. You can count, Basil." I purse my lips to stop myself from laughing.

We stare at each other for a long charged moment.

"We changed roles." I say and he says simultaneously: "Don't sass me! That's my thing!"

I put the plates on the table and sit opposite him.

"I am not eating in front of you." he declares. Obstinate boy.

"You could take this as a safe space in which you can learn to control your fangs and keep them from ruining your otherwise splendid social life." I can't help but bark a little at him. Then I slump in the chair, "Merlin mimicking your communication style is exhausting. How do you keep antagonizing people and still have energy to like, be?"

He grins, cutting a piece of pancake and smearing it with strawberry jam. His fangs pop and he startles. His grin fades. He looks panicky, like he wants to bolt.

I look him in the eye and say, "Well? Where do you get the energy, Baz?"

"I find I am fueled by righteousness." he says with a soft lisp.

We look in each other's eyes. I smile. If he can joke right now, we're on a good path.

"See if you can pull them back. I swear you do eat without them showing."

A frown appears in between his eyebrows. He seems to concentrate.

The fangs go back.

He looks surprised and takes a bite, chews, swallows. Takes another bite and the fangs pop again.

He growls annoyed.

"Will it give you a lot of mocking material if I reach out to hold your hand and tell you that you can do it, darling?"

He grins. Fuck I love it when he grins with his fangs out. I am happy I am not in tight jeans at this moment.

"It would actually be nice." He says in a small voice.

"You can do it, darling." I tell him softly and reach to squeeze his hand once before digging back in my food.

So we have breakfast together. He has the second one already, but it's forgivable. Especially since he made me oatmeal as well but just didn't get a chance to bring it. (I eat that while making the pancakes).

His fangs are a little unruly, but sometimes they listen to him and he looks really proud whenever they do.

I feel like I am part of something magical. Not magickal, but an untouchable unnameable type of magic. The kind of magic that lies in every day things, in little things. Like a shared knowing look, like a tender touch, like holding hands… The kind of magic that arises in between humans sharing their hearts.

"These are very good, Snow."

"Thanks, I remembered doing them from the potential future vision." I watch for some kind of reaction. None is given. He seems ok with the answer.

I bristle slightly.

"So I am allowed to feed you good pancakes from the visions, but I am not allowed to have feelings for you triggered by visions, yea?" I say and I am only half joking.

"No, you were right. Before, in the room. You were right." He puts down the cutlery and wipes his perfectly clean mouth with the napkin. He stares me in the eye for a long moment and exhales, his features are set in an expression of determination. "Honestly, Snow? I am fucking terrified that none of this is real. That when the visions stop, when we finish the Ethereal, you and I will go back to the *before* . To the nemesis status. To the *hating each other* situation.

How can this be real? Any of it? Only yesterday you hated my guts and now you're making me

pancakes. You're letting me hold you hand, you're calling me darling and it sounds bloody sincere! It stands to reason I am not trusting any of it." He finally takes a breath in.

"I reckon it *scares* me." he says with emphasis.

I feel like he is telling me more than he wants to with this. Why would he be scared that this is not real? Unless he wants it to be real. Very very badly.

In the visions everything is very very real.

"Baz. We literally are endgame in this future."

He grins at me, sheepishly. "We are?"

"Fuck yeah."

"I never imagined us as an endgame. More like, one of us will end the other."

"Well. We could..." I swallow. "If we wanted it in this present, in this reality, you know, we could be *it* for each other."

"It?"

"Yeah. It. The one." My God, the words I'm saying! Kill me now. Kill me with a club. Kill me with fire!! (Baz probably could, he wields fire like it's a given)

"In the visions, we are sickeningly sweet and clingy. And so fucking in love I think everyone that has to be around us probably hates us." I've lost all agency over my own mouth, there seems to be a direct channel from my brain-heart to my mouth and the filter is not working at the moment.

He smiles at my words, and suddenly I am not mad at the absent filter. Maybe no filter is good. Maybe it's even better.

"I don't see any way these feelings I have will just disappear once we kill the Ethereal." My voice is soft, but certain. I want him to believe me.

"So you agree to kill her?"

It feels like he is clinging to the subject change. I let it be.

"It will probably be the wisest thing. There's good reason. I do recognize wise ideas from time to time, Baz."

His grin is luminous now.

I chuckle at the intensity with which he is beaming at me. It should be disturbing that me agreeing to kill a god-like creature makes him so joyous, but it's not. It's cute as fuck.

"Yea, I guess my Aunt killed the mindspeaker boyfriend for a reason too."

"She killed her ex boyfriend?"

"Yea. He was not an Ethereal, I think. He was a very powerful mind speaker though, interested in knowledge too. Maybe an Ethereal in forming? Anyway. Fi has very questionable morals. It's a

Pitch thing." he says as way of explanation. "He was stalking her… after she had stolen an artefact from him. It was a whole thing. A whole saga."

"Merlin and Morgana. Remind me to never get on your Aunt's bad side."

He beams at me, almost bouncing off the chair.

"What?"

"I will."

"What?" I grin but don't know why.

"Nothing. I will remind you, Snow."

BAZ

He cares, the git. He actually means it! For real. Why else would he plan on hanging around me enough to meet Fiona?

I feel giddy all at once and energy is flowing in my body like a current.

SIMON

We finish eating in agreeable silence. Baz has this light shining in his eyes. I know I should probably wait with this info that I have, but I feel like I cannot keep this from him not a second longer. He seems okay with me. Why am I actively doing stuff to put this at risk?

Bah! I don't know how *not* to tell him!

The bloody mental box storage is overflowing. It turns out not thinking about stuff is catching up with me.

I can't hold the words back anymore. It's becoming an urgency - to tell him what I saw in the vision.

"Baz, I want to tell you something that might be triggering for you. Do you feel like, I mean, are you ok with receiving something sensitive now? Or would you rather I wait?"

"I would rather you stop freaking me out like this, Snow."

I am exasperated. He is nervous.

"You've been way more articulate than usual. Is this a vision's side effect? Is some of the emotional intelligence and communication skills leaking into you from the pseudo future?"

"I'm not sure. Maybe. At least when it's about you."

“So tell me, with your new super skills shouldn’t be a problem.”

“Go on!” he encourages when I wait a second too long. “I am not fragile.” He stands up and takes the plates and the cups to the sink.

Oh but you are, Baz.

So I tread carefully and try to keep it honest and simple.

I tell him about how he was drinking from someone, but I don't think he was turning her, because I was ok with it. He doesn’t say anything while he washes the plates and the cups.

I try not to be turned on by how he folds his sleeves up and how he dries the plates manually.

I fail.

My only escape is to look away and try to think about gross stuff, like boogers stuck on your finger. Instead my brain provides the image of Baz between my thighs, licking blood off my face and it only makes my situation worse. Then there is Baz grinning at me with fangs out. Baz giving me his hoodie. Baz tracing patterns on my back. Baz giving me noodles. Buttered noodles. Baz holding my head and stroking my hair.

I suddenly realize that none of those images are from the visions.

I smile to myself while I wait for him to figure out if he wants to say something.

“There are two versions. 1. The visions are lies. 2. There is a way to drink from someone and not turn them, because if I am sure of one thing, it is that no version of me would ever - EVER - turn anyone.”

He leans on the counter behind him, crossing his ankles.

“The visions aren’t lies.”

“I know.”

I face him on my chair.

“There was this thing that the Ethereal said, that I deny myself and should stop it. I think I want to know how.” Baz says finally.

He takes a deep breath and searches my face. “Can we trigger a vision in which there is more stuff about me vampiring?”

“Usually when I go in, there is some phrase or sentence that triggers me.“ I blush a little. “Or something we do. So theoretically, I think so, yea.”

“Ok. OK.” Baz nods a few times. A strand of his hair falls in his eyes and he doesn’t bother to smooth it back.

The desire to push it behind his ear is making my hand itch.

“What words would trigger a vampire scene? Something in which we can learn for sure whether i… he, this potential future Baz,”

“Let’s call him pF Baz,” I chime in, balling my hand into a fist, I want to touch him so badly.

“What?” he looks at me like I've gone crazy.

“I mean, to make it clear. You know, that it’s about pF Baz and pF Simon and not us. Not us from the present.”

He rolls his eyes.. “How to trigger the memory about the potential pF Simon’s vampirism?”

He makes an annoyed face. “I can call you pF Simon if you want, but I am not adding that ridiculous abbreviation in front of *my* name. I have some dignity, you know.”

I shrug.

We decide to try out different sentences and words and phrases both plausible and not really. Nothing works. More strands of hair are now framing Baz’s face. I am dying to tuck them behind his ears.

“We could try touching.” I blurt. Whoa. That slipped past me.

He freezes mid gesture.

“What?”

I avoid his gaze, this is new ground. We are not cloaked in night, none of us is in any kind of injury to allow for the touching prohibition to be lifted. We are not emotionally bruised to need the touch. It feels real, asking for it like this, openly. It feels risky and thrilling and worth it.

“I mean. In the potential future. We are a very touchy feely couple. No boundaries really from what I have seen. Lots of PDA and everything else. The chances that we trigger a memory through touch - I mean a pF memory - so touching would be an option.” I insist on using the abbreviation even if it makes it sound like I am talking about the pH.

When I look up there is a determined look on Baz’s face. He looks a little scary.

Before I backtrack or spill something even more horrendous than *touch me baby please* .

He brings his hands on my waist and pulls me closer, into him. He widens his stance so that I fit between his legs.

Electricity zips through me at the touch and proximity.

“Ok, Snow. We touch.” he says in half a whisper.

I nod and try to swallow but can't. All my brain function is focused on his mouth.

“How do we touch each other in the future?”

“Potential future," I say hoarsely. His lips thin to a line of annoyance, and his grip tightens. My heart skips a beat. “ *The future* . How do we touch, Snow?” he demands.

“I don’t know.” I reply weakly.

But I DO know. I just don’t know how to talk about it.

I squirm in his hold but thankfully he doesn’t let go, I just get us closer, more fused together than before. I place my hands on his chest, smoothing circles there. I can feel him underneath the fabric. I want to feel his skin. Then I tuck a strand of hair back behind his ear. Allowing myself the pleasure. My fingertips touch his face on the way there.

“We touch all the ways.” I whisper looking into his grey eyes now. ”And all the times.”

“Gentle touches,” I spread my fingers on his chest and with the other hand trace patterns at the back of his neck. He gathers me closer, bunching his fist in my shirt. I rub my nose on his neck.

“Intimate touches.” I whisper, because if I talk my voice will break and I will cry.

I must be entranced, because I lower my hand from his chest to his tummy and then slip my hand underneath his sweater. I splay my fingers on his bare abdomen. It contracts underneath my touch.

“Yeah?” he says back in that low gravelly voice that does things to my body. His right hand is on the small of my back, a few fingers on my bare skin, and his left hand travels up my spine to the back of my neck and cradles it there.

“Dirty touches,” I rasp and lick the side of his neck. He shivers visibly.

“Aggressive touches..” I bite his shoulder hard while digging my nails into his skin.

“And all sorts of kisses of course.” I can’t believe I am saying this. This is me begging shamelessly apparently.

He swallows and I follow the movement of his Adam's apple and before it bobs up, I plant an open mouthed kiss on it. His grip on the nape of my neck tightens. He waits until I meet his eyes before pulling me into him and kissing me once. It is short, it is not enough. It is everything. His lips are soft. Cooler than in the future. I wonder if that means anything.

“Where do you like to be kissed, Snow?” he nips at my lips again. Another stolen kiss. I want to tell him that there is nothing he needs to steal, that I want to give him everything.

"Hm?" he nudges me with his nose and I want to answer everywhere, but I manage to deter that reply before it reaches my lips.

“On my neck.” I whisper and my voice breaks in a fucking whisper.

He rubs his nose alongside my jaw and inhales before settling underneath it, he plants a chaste kiss there and still it makes me weak in the knees. I hold on to him tighter.

Then I feel the tip of his tongue licking me once and I lose it. I moan.

He proceeds to string open mouthed, wet kisses along my throat and he angles my head using his hand giving him more access. I whimper when he sucks at that soft spot right where jaw meets ear meets neck.

“And lips? Hm, Snow?” he nudges me with his nose. I am glad he calls me Snow, because maybe,

like this, I will remember to differentiate. I will remember that this is real and important in itself, that the future can hold whatever it wants, but the present is with us and about us.

I moan an agreement and he angles me back and attacks my lips abandoning himself in a kiss of ages.

He seems famished. Starving for my mouth and I KNOW I am, so I kiss him desperately. There are butterflies in my stomach which is flipfloping every time his tongue licks at mine. My knees are useless pieces of jelly so I hold on to him, tugging gently at his hair the way I know he likes and hear the rumble of his moan coming directly from his throat as I devour him.

We kiss like this for ages. Or a few seconds. I don't know how time works anymore.

His lips are puffy and reddish when we break apart. I kiss him again just to suck at his lower lip again, to see it redden again.

His eyes are hooded and pupils are dilated - but he has stopped and is staring at my mouth. I am suddenly afraid of what he might say next, something on the lines of: *Why did pF Baz make out with you again? This experience is horseshit.*

So I blurt, “This isn’t working.”

He startles and for a second I see that he is hurt. And then shields come up and there is no emotion. He begins to disentangle us but I move after him, not allowing space between us.

“I mean, no vision has been triggered. Maybe, we should try something else. Something more.” I save the situation, winging it in the process.

“Ok. like what?” he asks and his lips look so kissable I could die.

“Like… Like do something that you - I mean pF Baz likes.” He stops resisting me and lets me fuse us back - chest to chest, abdomen to abdomen, hips to hips (raging erection to raging erection).

“Like what?” he exhales loudly and the sound of it draws me nearer. Nearer still.

“Like this maybe?” I nibble at his jaw moving towards his ear. I gently bite the earlobe and then the outer shell. I kiss him there and alternate between nibbling, suckling and Baz moans.

Holy fuck.

My hips buck forward meeting his and we are both so hard and I sort of lose it, I go back to his mouth and try to suck his soul out of his throat while desperately dry humping him. Our hands are frantic on each other's bodies.

“Is this working?” he asks pulling back. My shirt is on the floor. And so are his clothes.I don’t recall when we took them off, but I am proud of us. So fast.

I nuzzle at his throat and then bite his bare shoulder. The bite feels like home. I kiss him over the bite and watch a shiver go down his spine in goosebumps..

“Is this working, Snow?” he demands again, his fingers in my hair, making me lose my mind.

“You call me Simon. In the future.” I tell his chest, following the ridges of his muscles with my fingertips. I bite and kiss myself a trail following them. One hand finds the curve of his butt and I

feel him over the trousers.

"And what do you call *me* ?"

"Baz." I kiss the middle of his chest. "And Darling," I look up to him when I say this. I pull his mouth on mine for one kiss and then break a millimeter away and whisper, "darling". I kiss his chin and bite it.

"And baby. I call you babe too."

I think I am done talking now. I want to kiss him and touch him and be with him so badly.

I want this Baz to be my pF Baz forever. I want my pF life***now.***

"Babe! You are not hunting for rats in the catacombs. Not ever again." I am seething.

We are stuck at Watford because of the fucking rainstorm. It's practically a hurricane at this point. We're in Baz's office. He's rearranged everything here in the 2 years he's been working as Headmaster of the school.

"Come on, Love, I survived for years on those rats. There's probably legends about me among them. The vampire of the catacombs. They probably think I was a bat." he waits. "Get it? Vampire bat? Like dracu-"

"I GET IT it's just not funny! You were starving yourself. Malnourished. You were grey the entirety of our school time - I thought that's how you knew one was a vampire: look for dying greyish skin! Imagine when I encountered the rosy healthy looking vampires."

I grit my teeth because if I go down that rabbit hole I will get more and more worked up until I either break something or tear up.

"Hey, I know. But it wasn't -"

"I swear to God Basilton Pitch-Snow. If you say it wasn't that bad I will rip your ear off. With my teeth. And no more car sex for like 5 years."

He barks a humourless laugh.

"Come on, Love, this will be a one time thing. A couple of rats. Like a diet. Until power is back up and the roads are driveable and I can get to the town. There's plenty to drink from there."

"Yeah, well, we are not there and you haven't drunk in 2 days and I don't like it. Food is important,Baz. And diets are dangerous shit. "

"Because they have the word die in it?"

"No, smart ass! Because they fuck up your metabolism, and don't make light of this, please. Please. *"*

"You're saying this because of the healthy slow food program you've got going."

"No, I started that program because I believe THIS. *Food is important. Baz. I was burning*

through so much energy that I was not having enough food while I grew up, I was practically starving each summer in different care homes. And you were starving yourself at Watford with rats. Even when you were at home you weren't drinking properly because of fucking taboos and judgements. Vampires need human blood for optimal health. And your health is important to me, you dummy, because you are the love of my fucking life. Ok?"

I have ended up from agitated pacing the room somehow in his lap now. We are wrapped around each other, maximizing contact and finding support in one other.

"So tap this vein now and you can tap this ass later." I say, trying for a lighter tone.

He exhales into my neck. I shiver.

"Imagine the Mage's face if he knew a gay vampire and his husband were occupying his office and shagging like crazy on his carpet."

I chuckle a little, but my heart isn't in it. I am still a little sad over him.

"I think that you creating the Watford Council as the main executive organ, and practically stripping away the power of the Headmaster and sharing *it, relinquishing control (!) would make him more uncomfortable than anything else."*

"And the fact that the council includes a vampire, a pixie and a minotaurus probably makes my Mother uncomfortable in her tomb."

"We've surpassed our parents and their legacy. Transformation and growth are good." I rest my head on his shoulder. "We're good. You're good."

"Yea. I know, love. I agree."

He rubs lovely circles on my back and I play with his hair.

"Just drink a little, let me give you this. *"*

He kisses my neck and I shiver.

"That's not how a vampire's bite works, Baz."

His hands are in my hair now, raking it. He finds my mouth and we kiss.

"I don't want you to have to give this to me too. I want to shag you senseless, kiss you, laugh with you, talk to you, be with you, know you, support you! ...if I start drinking from you, I'm afraid it will be too much."

"It won't. And it's only in cases like this. Emergencies. You are my 911 spell and I am yours. What's so wrong about that. Besides, I have a lot of blood." I make a shakey shakey move with my arms.

He chuckles.

I push away from him, my previous agitation rising back up with new force:

"Can you imagine, can you imagine what you could have been doing if you were drinking properly? If the world hadn't stigmatized vampirism, if it wasn't such a taboo to talk about it and learn about it! Then, THEN you wouldn't have had to shun your self, you would have drank without killing and wouldn't have seen yourself as a fucking monster. AND! And! All those hours spent

sleeping because your body simply was trying to compensate for bad nutrition - gahhh, you sleep now like what 4 hours per night? Baz. Imagine the unread tedious boring books you could have drooled over instead of sleeping?" he huffs air through his nose and pinches my sides in retribution. I go on, softer now. "I am certain, if you were drinking like you do now, your brilliant brain would have figured out a way to defeat the Mage and the Humdrum in like, in the blink of an eye!" I snap my fingers. "Like this! Bam! You've been Bazzed fuckers!"

He giggles at my outrage and his reaction makes me giggle too.

"It all ended up well, though. Didn't it?" he plants a quick kiss on my cheek bone.

"It did. But I hate to think about all the shit you went through even though you didn't have to, all the things you believed about yourself, hated about yourself... "

I take his face in my palms and smother it with kisses. I kiss his eyelids, his eyebrows, the tip of his nose, the curve of his lip, the side of his jaw, the middle of his ear, his forehead. I am a random kissing machine and he is my willing subject. I will kiss him forever, while the universe expands and stars explode. This. This is what makes our universe worth living in.

"You are the best person I know. You've always been pretty amazing." I tell him what I have been telling him for years now. The first time I told him that he is good and got him to actually listen - he cried. I kept repeating it and repeating it and tears simply poured out of him and those small 'no's, they were breaking my heart for him. "You are good." I tell him now and he nods. "Your vampirism doesn't define you as a person. Your actions do. The fact that you're a vampire, that's just a bonus. A wicked chapter in the Baz Pitch-Snow Book. And if that chapter was missing, we never would have defeated the Humdrum. Because you are a vampire, you could make the connection and break it!" I kiss his chin because I somehow missed it the first time around.

He smiles under my ministrations.

"And your fangs are fucking sexy."

He grins at me and pops them out. The tease.

My mouth drools a little.

I angle my head to the side, giving him access to my neck.

"Drink, Darling."

He sniffs my neck and then I feel a puncture. Like a paper cut but the pain soon goes away, and the familiar high settles in. I dig my fingers in his shoulders. I can feel a hard on stirring in my pants. Is it very perverted to be turned on by this? I don't know, but I am.

It's like the ultimate act of giving.

The ultimate act of loving.

Twisted. A little deranged, to be completely honest.

Ours. Fucking ours.

He cradles the back of my head as I feel this expansion of love and joy in the middle of my being.

Like giving him this is making life sing in my veins.

I moan in pain-pleasure and he removes himself from my neck, the fangs leaving my skin in one neat slide. He licks the place of the puncture several times, helping it heal.

When our eyes meet I feel the air crackling between us.

I need him inside me so much it's a fucking emergency at this point.

I pull his shirt apart and the buttons pop. I growl. This needs to happen now, I am so hard it hurts.

He seems to sense the urgency in me and starts undressing me as well.

I still hold that feeling of connection and unity and it is overwhelming. I kiss him and push him back on the couch. I kiss and bite and lick my way to his pants, his trousers are around his ankles and I rip them fully off. I trail kisses on his inner thighs and make my way up to his groin. He is restless under my touch, his pelvis rising up when I remove my lips from him.

"Simon..." he moans.

"Baz..." I look at him from between his thighs and gently bite him through the thin tented fabric of his pants. His hips jerk.

"I love you."

"I know." he Han Solo's me. " I love you, too." and I think I am going to die from so much emotion.

Chapter End Notes

As I was saying before, I really want Baz to be happy with who he is, I hate that he feels shame over something he didn't choose to happen. I just want my baby to be emotionally and physically in a good place, y'know?

Now that I've read AWTWB I am aware how Rainbow handled the whole drinking animals vs humans, and I'm happy I wrote the draft before reading AWTWB, I might have been swayed somehow.

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

BAZ

Snow's head is resting in my lap. I keep brushing his curls away, delighted by how they bounce back. I can't help myself from running my fingers through his hair. I stroke his face, his neck. Touches like whispers. Secret confessions that he's not here to hear.

I honest to Merlin don't know how to stop from touching him. All those years of wanting but keeping distance are coming back with a vengeance. Claiming him, claiming *this.*

His mind is in the potential future and I can't stop thinking about what just happened. My body was alive under his touch, every single nerve cell firing wildly. I felt alive. Not even close to dead, or undead or half dead. Truly alive.

If he loves me in a potential future, I don't see why this potential future can't be real. Just a future. Our future. I want it. I want it so badly I could cry.

And the fangs? Crowley. Could it be that I've been given some more control tucked in my vampire pocket and had no idea about it? It seems true, when I was retracting the fangs it felt like flexing an atrophied muscle. And Snow looked so proud of me, I don't remember ever having anyone look at me like that. (I could get used to him looking at me like that.)

Fiona's proud looks are more about how well am I filling the shoes that she wants me to fill. My father doesn't have it in him. (He misses the proud-look gene). I think with Mother's death, his affection for me got mixed in all the pain.

Daphne's looks of being proud of me don't count, because she gives them to everyone. When my stupid siblings scratch their ass correctly they receive one.

But Snow's, well, it was less about him, and more about me. (His pride, I mean)

It felt like he was a cat just basking in the joy of my success. (Small according to my standards, barely there yet, but success nonetheless.)

Controlling my fangs. Who would have thought? (Actually, I should have.)

I think about the Ethereal, as well. How much of what she's been saying is true? Sometimes she gets this carried away look, like she can't help herself from sharing.

Why does she keep appearing and disappearing? It feels counterproductive for someone so keen on learning and acquiring as much knowledge as possible.

It's hard to kill an enemy one fails to understand. So I try to figure her out, I go over everything I know and try to extrapolate the pieces that I don't know yet.

***

It takes Snow around 30 minutes to wake up. He pushes himself off the floor on his elbow and his eyes are glazed over while he looks around. He sees me and his pupils dilate. Visibly. His lips part and he licks them, like a cat would, when seeing the food and is read to pounce. I don't mind being the food if Snow does the pouncing.

With his free hand he pulls me closer by my neck and kisses me.

It is a hungry kiss. Like we've just been interrupted and he has to make up for lost time. He twists himself, pushing himself up and he straddles my lap. He holds me against him. As if I am ever going to move away.

I bring him closer, my hands fisted in the fabric of his shirt.

Closer.

He lets his knees slide to the sides until every bit of him is connected with every bit of me. He rocks against me and I moan in his kiss.

Closer.

How do I ever get enough of this?

Closer, please.

We both make small urgent noises, our hands are frantic, battling to get us mushed together. Teeth clatter, tongues twine, he is tugging at my clothes and I think I am about to rip his off when his stomach growls loudly. It is a roar really.

He giggles in my mouth, licking at my lips, lapping at it like a cat lapping water.

"Ignore it," he says in between kisses.

The said stomach growls again and now I am laughing too. I pull away and look at him properly. His eyes are shining. His whole face is lit up.

He kisses the tip of my nose and I don't know what to do with myself in the face of this type of kisses. He licks it and I let my head fall back and laugh heartily.

"Let's get some food in you, Snow."

"No!" he protests. "I can live off Baz kisses. Try me!" he smothers me with kisses, completely chaotic, he covers my face with his lips, nuzzles my neck, bites my shoulder, my chest, the back of my hand, my chin and gets back to kissing everything.

I relax into this onslaught of affection. I have never been loved like this, so openly, without restraints.

It feels new, it feels true. It feels scary.

And then he says, “mmm, I’ve missed you.”

I freeze.

“Who?” I pull away. “Who have you missed and who *are* you kissing, Simon Snow?” I ask, it feels like the muscles at the corners of my mouth are pulling down and down and down. He looks startled, confused.

“Which Baz? Me, this one here? Or the one from your visions? Because I am not him.

I lift him off of me. “I do not need another person in my life setting expectations for me. I do not need someone else in my life whom I constantly fail.”

I scramble away.

Burnt.

My lips burn. My heart burns. My eyes burn.

I will not cry.

I escape in the bathroom, I wash my face several times and ignore his knocking. My hands are trembling as I scrub my face dry.

What is wrong with me?

I am so angry I could murder someone now. I don’t know who I am angry at. The world? Him? Me? Everyone else except him? I don’t know.

He knocks timidly.

“Do you have an answer?” I demand angrily.

“Yes, no, I don't know.” He sighs.

“How typical.” I am seething.

“I know one thing for sure. You don’t have to be anything or anyone else for me to want you or miss you.” he says softly against the door. It is unlocked but he doesn’t try to open it.

Relief mixed with anger floods me. He has the audacity to be considerate during my outburst?! Infuriating!

“Yea? What if I never learn to control my vampirism?” I demand. There is a knot in my throat that makes it hard to breathe or swallow.

“I don’t think the issue is one of control. I think the issue is acceptance. In the visions you are accepting of what and who you are.”

“So what if I never do? What if I always hate what I am? What if I am never *good?* ” Good

enough. What if I never rise to this expectation? I think it was easier when all he expected of me was to be pushed off the stairs and to plot.

"I want any version of you I can get. I don't think this is really about me, though. So tell me Baz, what is this really about?"

I breathe heavily. It's like I am about to have an attack.

It's about the risk of losing *this.* The risk of knowing how it feels to bask in his affection and to have that taken away. To see disappointment in his eyes instead of pride at my accomplishments.

Merlin knows, I can take that look from my father's eyes, even Fiona's, but not his. Not after I know how it can be between us. How good it can be.

"Fear." I finally tell him.

"I know fear." he responds.

I snort loudly.

"You are the fiercest bravest person I know, Snow. You know fuck all about fear."

I hear a loud thud and it sounds like he kicked the door. I am glad to know he is not above kicking the door even though he is mature enough to not force his presence on me by opening it.

"I know fear, you legit arsehole. It's why I never look any further than the next day, and the next day. Sometimes it's the next hour. Sometimes it's the next minute. Because anything else is too overwhelming. Too terrifying. Do you have any idea what these visions are doing to me, Baz? How they are wrecking me! How terrifying it is to know that *this life* is at stake! I am a constant disappointment, Baz... To everyone, including you. I even see Penny looking at me with pity sometimes. Do not tell me about fear, Baz. It's what my life is made of, it's the background soundtrack of my life."

I lean on the door.

I want to open it.

I want to stay behind its safety forever.

"What do you do with it? The fear?"

"Nothing to do about it really.." His voice is so close. "I ignore it. Look at other things. Listen to other things."

"Like what?"

How do I open the door between us? How do I close the distance and not burn? (It turns out I am highly flammable not only physically)

"Like friendship. That's Penny. Ebb. Agatha even."

A beat. And then he goes on.

“Like focusing on current obstacles and not faraway monsters. Like obsessing over my roommate to take away my mind of the impending doom of the Insidious Humdrum. Like following my nemesis in the woods. Like.. ”

I open the door. We stare at each other. He looks distraught.

“Like wanting.” he reaches for me slowly, giving me a chance to move away or stop him. When I don’t, he pulls me closer by the sleeve. ”Like wanting *you.* ”

I let him. I let him get close to me. He places a hand at the nape of my neck and pulls me to him. He presses his forehead to mine.

A fierce determination flares in me: If I burn, then I burn. At least it will be by his fire.

I breathe his air. He breathes mine. How can there be fear or disappointment or failure in the act of breathing?

My hands frame his face. He cradles the back of my neck with one hand. He presses the other against my heartbeat. So slow, so steady, so almost not there, but still there.

“The Ethereal says I am not dead.”

“Duh,” he whispers against my lips and presses a soft kiss. A question.

I answer it with a question of my own, I bite at his lower lip and pull it in my mouth. He opens his mouth for me - an invitation. (Such a good answer.)

“This is freaking me out. The future that you’re seeing.” I confess against his cheek. I rub my nose on his skin and he tugs gently at my hair, arching his body into mine.

“It is a good future.” he tells me and kisses the inside of my ear.

I shiver.

He takes me by the hand and pulls me back in the room.

“We managed to trigger a good vision about your vampirism, Baz.”

My curiosity peaks. “So it worked.”

He nods, flustered and blushing.

“You don’t turn anyone. You can drink safely from people. Your bite gives them some sort of sensory high. And there is a network of people in London at least that is like a vampire blood donor pool. It’s all civil and consensual. It’s a whole culture, waiting out there. And you’ve been denied access because no one in your world knows better.” He dumps every bit of info on me and I try to file it away for later.

He tells me that drinking animals is not good for my optimal health, that as a healthy vampire I sleep less and get more time to study like a madman and to indulge in “other nerdy stuff”.

He tells me in the future I am ok with who I am. I am ok with being loved for who I am and just as all my inner alarms are ringing he says, “And it’s ok that you’re none of that now. No one chooses to not be ok. Most of the time we’re caused to be so. And that’s alright. When or if you’re ready, we can work on it. Find the Jackie girl, find the community of vampires, learn more about it. It doesn’t have to be anything you’re not ready to be.”

He’s rubbing circles on my back, smoothing my hair, kissing my temple, my eyes, and my alarms go quiet.

I bring him closer. There are tears in my eyes and really, no words.

A part in me wants to bristle so hard, aggressively kicking me with memories of my mother killing herself because she became a vampire, of my father looking away when I go for a hunt, of Daphne’s embarrassed face when I come back, of rat bodies lying in the ground.

You are a monster! This part of me wants me to know. And never forget.

But Snow wouldn’t love a monster. Snow slays monsters. A small voice protests. The voice is so weak. But it sounds familiar. Mine?

“It’s ok.” he keeps telling me, and he sounds so kind, so accepting that this small part of me, the one that I didn’t know existed even, stirs to stronger wakefulness and grabs at Snow’s words, at his softness, at his tenderness. It’s greedy for more and it makes me hopeful.

His stomach growls demanding attention once again and I can feel his smile on my neck where he is nuzzling.

“You are good, Baz.” he whispers in my neck. My mind dismisses the statement and instead concentrates on how he feels in my arms. How I feel in his.

And then he says, “You smell so good.” and rubs his nose on my neck, my chest, inhaling me. This I believe. I shower very thoroughly on a regular basis.

He hums in appreciation and I feel it in my whole body.

His stomach growls again.

“For fuck’s sake!” He exclaims annoyed.

“Let’s put some food in you, love.” I loosen my arms around his neck to be able to look him in the eyes. We stand like this breathing each other in.

There is no fear in breathing in. No fear. No doubts. No judgement. No expectations.

Breathing is easy.

His breath and mine mingle, who's to say where one starts and the other ends?

***

We search for eggs in the pantry. There is a bigger fridge in which we find them and Snow grabs 2 then goes back for 2 more. I grab a head of broccoli and throw it at him. "Vegetables don't kill, they make you healthy." I tell him. He returns it in the pantry with **a place for everything** spell. It feels weird to see him use the sword not for hacking at enemies but to magick broccoli back in its place.

He uses every opportunity to touch me. I use every opportunity to touch him. When he passes near the chair on which I sit, my fingers brush his thighs, when he passes near me, he touches my neck, my shoulders. He touches me when he speaks. I touch him when I answer. It's like something happened in our room. Some line was crossed and we can't help ourselves anymore. A dam was broken and now we're flooded with the need for physical contact. Proof that we are real.

Snow theorizes that all these visions burn more of his energy.

"I need to go refuel more often than usual, it's hard work living in two dimensions at once."

"Oh, crap, Snow! That's it!"

"She is going to refuel when she disappears. An Ethereal is a creature of two worlds minimum. Maybe being here is tiring for her, especially since she's roaming your chaotic mind, dissecting magic and whatnot, fucking unicorns in the Woods as far as I know. I guess that must be exhausting, especially taking strolls in your mind. If we can keep her from going to get a metaphorical bite, maybe we can weaken and kill her."

He nods his agreement.

I am thinking hard. While Snow is trying to light the gas stove. He is failing and I smell the hint of gas. I move him to the side and light a small fire on the tip of my fingers.

"Did you know that the gas itself, the methane, is odorless? Penny says they add a special chemical to make it smell like this so that Normals don't blow up their flats and houses and whatnot. The fact that it's odorless is why miners would take canaries with them in the mines..." he is babbling while frying the eggs. He is a *Penny says* encyclopedia.

And suddenly I get another epiphany.

"Oh. Wow." Is this how he and Bunce solve their little crazy quests? Snow just babbles about food and Bunce gets ideas?

He stops and looks at me expectantly. I oblige.

"The dead moth snowflakes. Every time she leaves, some of them are left behind. Sometimes more than other times. The more time she spends, the more of them die. They are the canaries! Snow! You're like a source of genius."

I am pacing the kitchen, thinking. Building and expanding on this idea.

"Whenever you get into a vision, your hands are surrounded by shimmering blue. What if that shimmer is just miniscule version of the snowflake moths - we see them as a signal that you're

going in the vision. But what if.. What if they are also causing it? What if that's her magic manifesting? Fuck, we need more data."

I remember that talk with the Ethereal when she said her death would leave Snow with continuous visions that would split his mind. But the more I think about it the more I think she was lying. If I wanted to stop two pesky little magelings from interfering with my research, I would probably dangle the threat of madness to stop them.

Right now, her torturing Snow seems more pressing an issue than the potential continuation of the visions as a trigger for fucking up Snow's mind. But still, the latter is not something one would generally wish to have happened to them. And more urgent things should never trump more important things.

We need more data. Data that we can trust. A plan is forming in my head. (I am really rather good at plotting. Snow's lucky I've been in love with him for ages, or he would have been properly fucked!)

"Snow. You'll need to do a memory spell on me."

"What? No!"

"Wrong. What? Yes! Baz, master of great plans!"

He shakes his head.

"Simon." I like how his face goes all soft when I say his name. "I am out for today, my magic is on a low. I will not manage it. You on the other hand should. And you need to do it now, before she is back with more clippers and magickal olden scalpels to pull at your magic strings. What if she is one of those whackos that can only deconstruct things and never put them back together?"

I bite my lip and think. "It's a consuming spell. I probably shouldn't have let you return the broccoli by magic, but, I mean, you are Simon fucking Snow, you have so much magic that you literally leak. I guess you'll have enough and more to spare."

"I don't think the magic is the problem. The skill is. I've only done a few simple spells until now. What if I fail and wipe all your memory?"

"There will be no wiping, just summoning the right memory."

"I might summon a demon." He offers unhelpfully. I resist the urge to roll my eyes.

"Not unless they live in the memory, you won't."

"You're infuriating." he makes a face at me.

"Pot, meet kettle."

"Ok." he tastes the eggs, chews and swallows. He thinks some more and then agrees. I thank the power of food for such a quick agreement.

"What is the spell?" He asks and takes the pan off the stove.

“I am not eating!” I tell him when he starts setting up a second plate. He gives me an annoyed look.

“Not because of the fangs, because I am not a bottomless hole of food, that’s why. You eat. I will plot.”

He giggles like he’s wanted to hear me admit it for ages.

“Yea, Snow. I plot.” he roars with laughter and I join him in.

SIMON

In the end we stop at *Let me pick your brain, please.*

While I am pointing the sword at him, it sounds a little like a command that if disobeyed ends in decapitation. I tell him as much and he rolls his eyes.

“You had so many chances to decapitate me while we were in full antagonization mode, I don’t think you’ll do it now that you’re fonding over me so hard.”

I push his face away with my hand, covering his word hole. He grins underneath it and bites at my palm. I pull him in for a quick kiss, because flirty Baz is my Achilles’ heel.

“After you cast it, you can ask me anything and I will remember. Ask me about the spell my aunt shared with me when I was ten.”

“Ten?! That’s savage.”

“That’s Fiona.”

I am nervous. My palms are sweating and I can't seem to swallow fully. I do this odd annoying half swallow that leaves me with more saliva in my mouth than before.

“What if I scramble your brains out?”

“You won’t.”

“I could.”

“You might.”

“What?!” I am horrified. Does he think this is a joke?

“Why are you so calm about it?” I demand.

“I don’t know, Snow. I saw you cast with your sword. You are, well, I can’t believe I will say this - you aren’t half bad with it. You’re better when you use the sword for slicing and dicing enemies, but that’s just your calling, I suppose.”

“I don’t like pointing the sword at you.” I admit.

“That’s a first.” he says in a subsided voice. “Now concentrate.”

I concentrate on the words, filling them with magic. It is still surprising how easy it is. How nothing blows up. How his cranium doesn’t open up for me like a fridge door to let me pick his brain.

I ask him about the spell and he says,

“I remember,” he smiles. “It’s that annoying *can’t get you out of my head* song by Kylie Minogue”

“Who?”

“You don’t need to know. Ask me about the second part of the spell.”

Yeah right.

“What’s the spell that kills the mindspeaker that Fiona shared with you?”

Baz with a stuffed nose. Baz with a running nose. Hello, strange world!

I probably shouldn’t be enjoying it so much, but I am.

“I am sorry, Fiona, Baz and I can’t come to the party. He has the sniffles and I have to take care of him. Bring him tissues and such. Kiss his woes away.” I listen to her answer and reply loud enough for Baz to hear.

“Yes, I know he is a vampire. I don’t know what happened.” I tell her.

“Fiona says to use a normal nasal spray or a clear the pipes *spell.” I tell him, then back to her “We tried those, Fi, nothing works.”*

Baz glares at me and at the nasal spray that lies in the garbage bin. “I am not a bloody Normal!” He’d roared.

“He says it is an allergy,” I whisper loudly so that the love of my life who's currently acting like a 5 year old kid in the body of a man in his late forties can hear, “but I think the baby has the sniffles. Yup, I indeed like the word sniffles and Baz in one sentence.”

“Aham, the situation is bad. I removed all mistletoes from the house, don’t want to have to snog him in case he is infectious.” A pillow clocks me in the head and I positively cackle with mischief.

I pull at the covers and smother him with kisses while Fiona makes gagging noises on the phone and protests having to listen to that.

I shove the phone in his hand: “Talk to Fi, darling. Tell her we can’t come. And maybe blow your nose once for good measure.”

He is lying in bed, with his nose stuffed. He’s surrounded by Christmassy cushions. I can’t help myself but keep bringing him more, duplicating those that he likes. His eyes are red and his nose has been running since this morning. Cushions are my way of coping with this unusual situation.

I hear Fiona on the other end, complaining that Trivia night will be ruined now, because Baz is

like an infinite source of factoids about everything. When he and Pen are in the same party, we make sure to put them in separate teams, or else it's simply not fair.

I put some aquamarine socks with kittens and bows on his bare feet. I kiss the hollow below his ankle bone before putting them on - and he tries to evade me, being the ticklish devil he is.

I smile to myself because Lucy finds it hilarious to give Baz kitten socks. "It's because of his fangs," she roars with laughter every time he protests.

I think this is Karma. He gives me outrageous socks. She gives him kitten socks.

Like the circle of life from Lion King, but better - with socks.

I bring Baz his favourite chick pea soup and some herbal tea with honey and lemon.

He eats half of it and doesn't drink his tea.

All the curtains in the room are closed. It is daylight outside, but we are in twilight inside. He was more sensitive today to the light, which translated into testiness and general air of irritability. It must be completely odd, to have never been sick and then BOOM! You've got the sniffles.

"Could it be an allergy to something you drank?" I ask, checking his temperature.

"To what?"

"Ok. Maybe not some thing *exactly. Some* one *?"*

He shrugs and fluffs a pillow in his hands. The ornate ring on his finger catches the stray ray of sunlight and glints, grabbing my attention. It always slides to the right, so I reach out and center it again. He smiles his thanks. It warms my heart whenever I think about what these rings do and mean. (I have one that matches his, it stays put in the center and doesn't dare slide left nor right).

"Lucy is coming home today for the first time since she started college and I am a leaking faucet." He huffs an annoyed sigh.

"She will not love you less, leaking nose or not. I am sure she will bring you a pair of kitten socks or a kitten sweater." An evil smile is tugging at my mouth. "Or Zeus forbid - a kitten!"

He shudders.

Is it bad that I find his condition endearing? He thrashes about like a toddler. REFUSES to blow his nose instead keeps sniffling and trying to swallow it. It's quite disgusting. Baz is never *the one with the disgusting habits, so this is an absolute delight.*

He groans when another attempt at pulling whatever is in his nose in his throat to swallow it fails.

I massage his shoulders and he relaxes into my touch.

"This is horrible."

"Nah, it's alright."

I kiss his brow and he sniffles.

His forehead has lines of age and thought, and worry etched in his skin, the corners of his eyes bear the memory of his love for laughter. There are a few white hairs in his otherwise black as night hair. I brush it away from his face. He leans into my touch and sighs.

Poor baby.

"Do you want me to read to you?"

"You know I love your voice." he tells me, drawing a smile from me.

I look up at him, "I know, it's sexy shmexy, right?"

I wiggle my eyebrows at him.

"Not when you're saying things like sexy shmexy," he retorts and I bark a laugh. He is adorable when he is irritated like this.

I take a book that he is reading now Magickal creatures. A history of discrimination and hate crimes. *I put the book back, this doesn't sound like the right reading material.*

"I want Shakespeare." he pouts.

Of course he does. I hate Shakespeare.

I do however make the voices even though I always stumble on the old English. It brightens his day. When Lucy was a kid she too would always demand Shakespeare. Needless to say, I hated Shakespeare even then.

I take A collection of Shakespeare's works and prop myself on the bed.

I whirl the mental roulette and stop on Romeo and Juliet. My evil plan is to make Juliet's voice all low and rumbly, like a tractor, and Romeo's all squeaky and weird, like wet snickers on shiny tiles, just to make him laugh so hard - I want to see snot coming out of his nose and maybe capture it. (the moment, not the snot, although I might accidentally 'capture it' too) I have my phone right beside me. I might read everything like a rap. I am not sure yet. But I feel my brain concocting something brilliant.

I lie beside him and open the book. A piece of yellowish paper slips out and lands on his right side.

"What is it?" he asks.

I pick it up and look at it.

"Gibberish. Maybe something Lucy wrote when she was a kid and we kept it as a bookmark? We are *rather cute albeit sometimes crazy parents."*

He takes it from my hand to examine it while I leaf through the book for Romeo and Juliet. I find it and get ready to read. I make myself comfortable on his abdomen.

I read for about half an hour when Baz intervenes in the most random way.

"Did you know -"

He starts and I groan internally. He's found his love of trivia games a while ago and now it's like I am living with google. If google was a person I deeply love, that is.

"Simon, love, did you know that Shakespearean works are one of the most underrated sources of magickal spells?"

"Yea?"

"Yea, especially since the revival of classical theater in the first two decades of the two thousands. And Carl Lewis's work too." He nods wisely.

"How fascinating, darling. Do you need a cold compress? An emergency dose of Trivia night? We could connect via skype. Maybe an aspirin? Are you feverish?"

He ignores me.

"The line Off with his head! *Is Shakespearean AND from Lewis. So technically it holds double power. It could take off anyone and anything. Interesting, no?"*

"Thank you for the random lesson in the middle of an allegedly love story about two teenagers that fall in instalove and are about to die by the end of the week or whatever."

He grins at my accurate description.

"You're welcome. My gift of imparting wisdom is what keeps me going."

I roll my eyes at him and he shoves his tongue at me. So mature.

He falls asleep after an hour or so, and I rest my head on his stomach. We make an odd T-shaped human construction on the king-sized bed.

Just as I am about to get up to make something to eat, the roof collapses in the dining room and I hear Lucy's Santa Clause mimicking voice, "Santa is here!" and then in a Lucy voice "I'll fix EVERYTHING! I swear on Merlin's poorly rocked sword."

And then "I might need another Mage's help, I have been travelling on a magicked sleigh and trolling Normals...so I am running low on magic."

And then, when there is still no answer from us, (because she shocked us dead) - again in a Santa Claus voice:

"Ho ho ho, Daddies?"

"Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! Snow? you ok?" he smooths my hair as I come back flailing.

"A vision." I tell him. I wouldn't mind the visions so much if every time I end up in Baz's arms.

"You had the sniffles." I giggle.

"An allergy probably," he says with confidence, dismissing any other possibility.

“Mhm. Did you manage to extract the second part of the spell? Or do I need to pick your mind again?” My mind is reeling, sifting through the latest vision in the background.

“I did, actually. You did good work on that spell. I’m proud of you. It’s *Another Red Card!* ”

Weird, but ok.

“Do you think she will be here soon? Do we have enough magic to take her today?” I mean. I probably have, but I am not sure I can wing a spell I have never tried before and have it work at once.

While Baz answers my mind keeps repeating: Weird. Red Card? What’s that supposed to mean?

“ *Can’t get you out of my head* should be cast by you.” Baz is thinking aloud. Penny does that too sometimes. “Maybe after a little rest you could be able to do it today. The killing part will be done by me.” he says it in a voice that leaves no space for objecting. “But no, I don’t have enough magic today. I feel like I will need to put a lot of oomph in that one. Let’s hope that she doesn’t stop by to torture you today. And tomorrow we end this.”

I nod.

“Baz, in the vision, there was this moment, you know the kind that stands out because it sort of doesn’t fit?”

He just looks at me, not really comprehending.

“Well, it doesn’t matter that really, it’s just, you were telling me about a spell that could take down anyone - *Off with your head.* ”

“From Lewis’ Alice?”

“And Shakespeare.”

“The spell Fiona used worked and it was the card one.” he says, but I see him considering my words.

Then he grins at me, “We’ll have one spare. Our backup spell.”

I beam at him.

He bites his lip and sobers.

“You’ll have her trapped in your mind, and I will need you to be strong, ok? I am assuming she will not go down without a fight.”

I feel like there is something he is not telling me. I hold his gaze for a while.

I trust him. Whatever he is not telling me, I trust he has a reason for it.

***

We end up going outside and playing with snowballs. I turn off all things related to the upcoming battle. Once we’ve settled all details and all that’s left is to wait, I’d rather not spend this time tied in knots. If we fail at killing the Ethereal, I’d rather have spent the day having fun with Baz.

I insist on going out in the snow and Baz says it's juvenile but he goes out with me anyway. And secretly has a lot fun. Although, when he is doubling over with laughter and his face brightens up with mirth - it's not really a secret. He reminds me of the smiling Baz from the visions.

And it is so lovely, even with the cold. There is so much snow, like, everywhere. There is no getting away from it. And no one has been here to clean it from anywhere. It's like we're allowed to open this world of crisp whiteness, we are the Columbuses of white Watford, except less mass-murdery.

I plop myself on the soft snow blanket. My hands are red and hot and somehow cold? I don't understand biology. Baz's nose is slightly shiny and red too. When I kiss it, it is cold.

He looks adorable, with his hat and his green coat and wearing this small happy smile.

We lie in the snow and watch clouds passing on the sky.

"You know. I really didn't want you to leave the other day. It seems like a lifetime ago. Anyway, I was so sad and then during the night the snowfall happened and your Aunt couldn't come. I guess what I want to say is I am really happy you're here. I would probably be dead or insane by now if you hadn't been here with me."

"Probably impaled on your sword in the shower," he provides, helpful git.

"That was such a lame hiding place."

He smothers my face with snow and I laugh, straddling him. Instead of paying back the same way, I kiss him then I scrape my teeth over his cheekbone. The bruise from my punch has healed completely.

This kind of lightness that we've surrounded ourselves with - it feels like we already have the future visions. It makes me euphoric.

We spend hours outside. We play with and in snow like kids, and I don't remember ever being so happy and carefree.

And then it starts.

BAZ

I was never a kid. Not really. I was a small parody of an adult, surrounded by responsibility and the weight of expectations and zero ideas on how to deal with them. I never had siblings to play with. For the first years after Mother's death, father was too sad to recognize that I was a child. I was a witness, a bystander, a guilty party even (I was the one in the nursery after all). Not a kid though.

And then he found Daphne and they sort of had their thing going on. Their life was around me, but I wasn't really a functional part. More like an appendix. Not really relevant, but there. An atavism of a previous life. A previous family.

The adults around me were more occupied with the war, and the political undergoings, and how

they could mold me into something to fit into their schemes. Crowley, I was such an eager little parrot. Such an eager little soldier. I've always been laying heavily on Snow that he's a mindless pawn in the Mage's game, and I think I was doing it because, well, because in a way I saw myself in him.

No one in my life ever knew to prioritize play for me as a kid.

So I was a proper adult in the body of a child.

I learned to live in my head, in music, in ideas, in books. Always in books.

I had no idea living in the body, allowing it to feel joy, to move so carelessly, to play, to goof around could be this… this electrifying.

My mind reels with so many thoughts and feelings. I think in awe that Snow has so many of my firsts: the first boy I ever loved. The first boy I ever punched. The first boy I ever kissed. Now, the first snow ball fight.

We've decided to go make something to eat, when Snow doubles over abruptly. His hand slips from my neck where he toyed with my hair and he grabs at his chest.

"Oh fuck. It's started again."

I hoped against hope that we will have a reprise, that we could have this day to power up before she returned to dissect his magic, whatever that means.

I help him up and he grunts.

We manage to get inside the tower - we've been playing just outside it.

He collapses on the floor, sliding along the closest wall.

I take off my hat and coat. The anger inside me is heating me up. I could go up in flames now.

"You want me to sing you to sleep?" my voice doesn't reflect the turmoil inside.

"Do you have enough magic?" he croaks.

"I don't know. Probably not. But I can try." I reply honestly.

I sing to him the cradle song, fill it with magic, but it is so weak, I barely get to the middle of the song when I am fully out. He asks me to finish the song anyway. His voice is so frayed and soft.

I am not used to feeling useless. I am a mage, not a sodding Normal.

He has his eyes closed, a deep frown between his brows. His face is pale and every once in a while

he tenses, clenching my hand.

I know he is holding back any sounds and any expressions for my benefit. I can hear his heart hammering against his rib cage. Sweat shines on his forehead, and above his upper lip. He wipes at it with his sleeve for the first couple of times but then he gives up. I do it instead. I use my scarf and dry his face.

“By Merlin she is meticulous.” he mumbles. “It feels like she is ransacking me.” another moan. “Baz, knock knock.”

“What?” Is he making jokes?

“You’re supposed to say who's there? You prat...” he chides.

He moans in pain and I quickly ask: “Who’s there?”

“Iman.”

“Iman who?” I humour him.

“I’m an onion made of magic and the Ethereal is peeling me layer by layer and it hurts like a motherfucker.”

“That’s not funny, Snow.”

“It is a little funny, if you look at it the right way.” he manages to get the words out before a shiver passes through him.

He starts leaking magic, the smell of smoke permeating the air around us.

“Baz.”

“Mmm, Love?”

“ I don’t want to go off.” he sounds desperate, switching from the faux humorous to honest in a blink.

“I can knock you out. You owe me a punch, remember?”

He chuckles weakly. His eyes still closed.

“Yea, ok, Baz. Knock me out.”

SIMON

“Are you ready, love?”

I nod, my eyes shut.

I feel the press of his cool lips against mine as Vissa is pulling and tugging and slicing. And then the welcoming shock of physical pain and then blackness.

“Are you ready?” I ask and my voice is thin at the edges.

He looks dashing in his floral suit. It’s louie blue with dark purple flowers outlined in black and white. I know I don’t look half bad myself, in a more tamed 3 piece black suit. My waistcoat is magenta - according to Baz. I still have trouble with all the colour names.

I bite my painted nails (they’re louie blue too (according to Baz) so we match). Baz takes hold of my hand and kisses my knuckles. Our hands hold no rings. There is a pair we want to acquire, but that will require a full blown adventure, probably pissing off some god-like creatures. It’s something to deal with later.

“It’s going to be ok, Love, don’t fret.”

It’s funny how we weren’t as dressed up at our wedding as we are now, when we want to announce it to Baz’s family.

Although, it makes sense. We did elope, after all. The only thing that are the same as in that day are the socks - with broccoli on them and flying ninjas. (Baz has developed a thing for ridiculous socks and I have to suffer through it while secretly enjoying it. I guess it is only fair - since I buy him outrageous t-shirts that he has to wear. Like the last one: I photoshopped his head onto a bee’s face and wrote: Oh don’t mind me, I’m just Bazzzzzing by. Double pun if I ever saw one. I think I wear that one more often than he does, though. Maybe I went overboard with it.)

“They aren’t going to be happy about this.” I nod at the door, meaning his family that is behind it. He’s aware of course. All the other family dinners were so awkward and passive aggressive that I ended up bitching about it in therapy. I still cringe over the time when I explained to them that as a pansexual I am not attracted to any gender specifically, but to the person, and then they seemed shocked that I would "choose" to be with a man when I could "choose" to be with a girl. They were quite resentful that I didn't leave Baz alone when I had a choice. As if there was ever any choice involve din falling head over heels with this wonderous brilliant boy.

Baz’s family keeps hoping he would come out of his ‘phase’ of homosexuality and marry a nice magickal girl. (At least half of my family is in the prison and can’t really object)

They still can’t seem to wrap their head over the fact that Baz and I are an item. We’ve been one for over 4 years. You’d think they had enough time to swallow this fact, but they didn’t.

I feel full of adrenaline. We’re about to tell them we’ve made the permanence of our union official.

“If it gets really bad, we can just go dancing. I want to lust over you under the rhythms of bachata.”

We grin at each other.

Baz knocks on the door.

Whatever awaits us behind it, I am ready. I will not go down without a fight.

Chapter End Notes

Shit's getting real ya'll! (Ah, wait, no. that's in the next chapter)

PS lots of cat mentions in this one. I'm away from my cat and that is reflected in the writing, I guess..

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

I am an editing machine. Hope this chapter finds you thirsty for slaying monsters.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

BAZ

I hate punching Simon Snow. I don't want to ever have to do that again.

I carry him to our room. It doesn't feel right to wait for the Ethereal anywhere else. That room is our territory. Our home.

While carrying him, I don't use any spells. I rely on my vampire strength. It feels bizarre. Usually I rely on my magic.

I lay him in bed and then I plop beside him and I sleep. I don't even have enough magic to spell the bruise on his face away. *Tomorrow.* I tell myself and force myself to sleep.

I promise myself: I will get all my strength back and will summon all my magic and will kill the sodding Ethereal when the time comes. Hopefully sooner rather than later. I'm done with anyone fucking with Snow. First goes the Ethereal. Then goes the Mage and the Humdrum.

All these feelings for Snow are coiling around my heart, escaping from its center and unwinding in my entire body. From now on, whoever fucks with Snow has to go through me first.

SIMON

It takes me a while to assess my whereabouts.

It's twilight. Baz and I are a heap of tangled limbs. His head rests on my arm and it has completely fallen asleep. I extricate it from his head using my other hand. It feels like moving an alien snake that's attached to my torso. Baz's hair is matted and tangled. I guess we've been tossing and turning the entire night.

I am hungry, but that is not news.

My head hurts and when I pass a hand over my face I realize I have a stinging bruise. Then I remember. Yea. Baz knocked me out alright. At least we're even on the punching front.

I nudge him using my numb arm as a nudging stick.

“Baz,” I whisper. He stirs.

Gah, my breath smells horrible. Maybe I shouldn’t wake him just yet and take a quick detour to the bathroom? Before I make up my mind he opens his eyes, sees me and smiles crookedly. Then he notices my bruise probably because his face turns to anguish. He bolts up and reaches for his wand under the pillow.

“No, no!” I tell him, hurriedly. “No spells, baby. It’s ok, it’s just a bruise.” These terms of endearment keep slipping past my lips a lot easier when I’ve just come out of a vision. He doesn't seem to mind, I'd expect Baz to tell me if he did.

Even though my breath stinks, I peck at his lips once.

“Just a bruise. Don’t worry. You did the right thing.” I rest my head on his chest, hugging him. My numb arm is coming back to life and I use it to effectively trap him against me. “Keep your magic. We might need it sooner rather than later.”

His face is grim when I look up.

He touches my bruise with his thumb then pulls me up and kisses the place just below it, above it, to the side. He surrounds it with kisses. I turn my face to catch his mouth before he plants another chaste kiss and kills me with wanting more.

It turns out, he doesn’t mind my breath either.

“I want to fucking destroy this bloody Ethereal.” he growls into my hair, gathering me closer.

“So. The mageling and the bloddrekka, *two children* really, plan to kill *me?* ”

We pull apart and jump to the floor. Baz’s wand is pointing at her and I summon my sword.

I feel her rummaging in my mind and want to shake her off, but how, really? I snarl at her.

I wonder if Baz hears her too. Is she broadcasting to two minds at once?

He looks bloodthirsty, so I am assuming he might.

She is standing in the middle of the room. A creature of snow and blue light and disdain.

We circle around her. Her lips curl in an eerie smile.

“When the prey thinks it’s the predator,” she whispers in my head, and by the way Baz’s lips tighten in one thin line, in his as well. “It just makes the predator laugh.”

Then she does just that. She laughs at us. Her alien eyes are the same colour as her cloud of ice moths swirling furiously around her feet and hands.

We steer clear of them - their burn is not something we want to experience again.

“One last chance, Ethereal, we don’t want to fight.” I tell her. It is almost true. I don’t want to. I would much rather be snogging Baz right now.

“Then don’t, mageling. I’ve figured out the right way to dissect you.”

“You mean my magic?”

“Freya-Frigga… Or as you might say: Tomato-TomAto,” Her voice rings hollow in my head.

Baz snarls. I think her practically saying she will dissect me makes him angry. It just makes me scared.

He looks fierce and ready to kill. I am struck with how magnificent he really is, before realizing this is most definitely not the time and place for these thoughts.

“I’ve found the way you steal magic. You’re pulling directly from the fabric. So smart! It unravels and unravels, but you use it for stupid things like making it snow so that your lover won’t be able leave. I think I could use it better.” She really likes listening to herself talk. It must be lonely in the world of knowledge obsessed psychopathic god-like creatures. An Ethereal doesn’t refuse an interested ear, does one?

Then she spreads her wings, unravelling her wing-toga and reveals a body made of blue scales. Like a body armour made of shimmering blue light.

One of her wings gets Baz in the abdomen and throws him to the wall. I duck underneath the second wing, slashing upwards with my sword, hoping to cut it as it opens right above me.

The sword only passes through the wing and nothing happens.

So she can get material when she feels like it and ethereal when she seeks to escape my sword. That’s good news. It means we should be able to hack her in pieces at some point or another. That's also bad news. It means we need to make her go material if magic fails us. It's bad because we have no idea how.

Baz snarls from the wall, pointing his wand but thankfully not casting. We need all the magic he has. I can see him fuming angrily. Struggling to hold back.

As she shakes her wings, more and more snowflake moths start coming out from underneath her scales. They fill the room and I cast **dead in the air** and a handful of them drop to the floor. But there are so many. And they keep coming, I raise my sword and cast another **dead in the air.** A dozen or so of the moths nearer my face fall to the ground and thaw.

But there are more and more coming out from underneath the folds of her scales and now they land on my face, burning me with their cold and magic. I try to wipe them away, but others land on my wrist, where my skin is bare underneath the sweater.

I hear Baz cursing on my right and the next thing I see is fire.

Baz makes fire in his hand and throws it up, expanding it in the air. The moths sizzle in the air like droplets of water on the frying pan. Like snowflakes in a fire. He does it once, twice - I have never seen him wield fire like this. My mouth dries with the danger of it. He could burn.. He could die.

Vissa the Ethereal, doesn't seem impressed with us. Especially with Baz. Most of her moths have been caught in the flames and thawed and now I get a glimpse at her unveiled feet - they are made of bones connected wrongly, like someone smashed random bones from random body parts into a semblance of a foot. The skin around it is greyish blue, tightly wound around the edges of the bones.

"Pesky little Bloddrekka," she murmurs, forgetting about me. "I hoped you'd be smarter than to go against me. You could have had such a life!" I realize she isn't speaking in my mind. Fuck, that is against the plan! How will we trap her if she decided, NOW of all times to use her fucking mouth. I leap to the right, closer to Baz and see her mouth opening as she talks, showing off a mouthful of shark-like teeth, spiraling inside her mouth. She speaks through her mouth and the voice is as alien as the blue in her ice. It makes my skin crawl. Her voice seems to vibrate from inside out and I feel a sharp pang in my ears extending inside my cranium, inside my brain. "Everything you know shall be mine." She is stalking towards Baz, who holds the wand directed to her but looks at me, sideways. There is apprehension in his eyes. *For me* . I suddenly realize.

I feel blood trickle from my ear and on my neck. I wipe at it.

Fuck. My ears don't like her voice. Neither does my brain apparently. It feels like it's got icicles in it.

She bares her grotesque bouquet teeth, curling up her lip. And more teeth pop out.

Baz seems paralized. He is staring at her teeth.

"Recognize your ancestor, Bloddrekka?"

"Hey, Ethereal, how about you leave him alone and **kindly fuck off** " I forget to use my sword when I put magic in the words. But I am so angry at the way she is looking at Baz, like she is a mad scientist looking at her new project, that my emotions seem to be the catalyst for unaided magic. Or as she would probably say - I pull from the other string, (the one that unravels the fabric of magic itself. fuck.).

The magick hits her and she backs away a meter or so, into the desk.

"How dare you!" she shrieks in my head. And she thunders inside my skull, threatening to rip it apart from the inside out. She makes a move as if to leap towards me, her teeth sticking out of her mouth, thinning her lips into a rubber like line. She drools a little and begins to pull back her teeth.

Her wings flap once, making waves of frosty wind swirl in the room. No immaterial thing could do that.

Baz and I barely share a look - we're thinking the same thing. We need to act now!

Baz casts a quick **Simon says** my way just as I channel my magic and cast: **I just can't get you out of my head!**

I feel a pull and a tug and then her body goes limp, as if it's floating in the air. The snowy moths hang around her, suspended snowflakes forgetting to fall.

BAZ

He did it! Snow seems to be in shock too. He is gaping at the floating Ethereal and carefully nudges her wing. I only look - it feels ill advised to nudge a creature that can and wants to kill you. But then again, Snow doesn't seem to have any self-preservation instincts. His hand goes through the wing. So she is not material *now* . How convenient. When that blasted wing smashed into me it was material enough to leave a bruise. Ah, it would have made killing her so much easier. Hacking with the sword is Snow's specialty after all. We'll have to do it according to the plan.

"It's like *almost* snow," he whispers, passing his hand again through the wing. Then, suddenly, his eyes narrow and he shakes his head once, twice. Like you would do when there's water stuck in your ear after swimming.

"She is fucking loud. And angry."

"How does it feel?"

"Like a wild beast entered my room and I shut the door on it. I can feel the tug towards her body. They're connected. The body is her anchor."

"Ok. Don't let her open the door yet. I need you to focus, ok? This is not going to be pleasant, I assume."

He looks confused at me.

"Just trust me, ok?"

He nods.

I didn't share this part of the plan with him, but really I can't kill her unless I know for sure it is safe for Snow in the long run.

So I raise my wand and cast on Snow an accurate but powerful: **The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth!**

It is not the most pleasant spell in usual circumstances, but what I have planned here is to get Simon to act as an extractor of truth from the Ethereal's mind, trapped within his brilliant head. It will probably be less pleasant, assuming the Ethereal will not really want to cooperate. I just hope it will work. Snow is strong, he can take it.

"Will killing the Ethereal stop the visions?" I ask crisply.

Simple yes or no question. I chose it well beforehand. Open-ended questions require too much digging, too many details, and I don't know if Snow can manage the Ethereal for too long. (I don't know how long the spell will hold the ethereal in his mind either. Too many unknown variables for me to feel at ease with our unfolding plan)

"I don't know!" Snow yelps.

"Look for the answer in the Ethereal, Simon. It's there." I coax him. We can't afford another *I don't know.*

“She doesn’t *know* , Baz! Fuck! It drives her insane that she doesn’t know! It’s the first time this happens to her.”

Snow’s face is pained.

Another question. I did not prepare for an *I don’t know* . I only prepared for a *yes* or *no* . And you don’t want to know the preparation for the “no”.

The spell won’t last long, I made it powerful but not lasting, I had to choose my priorities.

And then I remember. The slash on his arm when he stumbled out of the woods. A blood contract. An agreement.

“Can the agreement be broken if one of the parties dies?”

“Yes.” he grits. “Oh, she doesn’t like that. She doesn’t like that, Baz. She is going to rip the door off the fucking hinges. Argh!”

The last question is just to be sure, can’t take any chances with Snow’s sanity, and then we can get on to it. “Does breaking the agreement stop the visions?”

He nods repeatedly and that is enough for me.

I raise my wand, focus and cast **Another Red Card!**

Nothing visibly happens. The moths still hang in the air. So does the Ethereal.

I wait.

I turn to Snow for feedback - can he still hear her in his head?

That’s when I notice Snow’s face - he looks horrified.

“Simon, what’s happening?”

He raises one hand and it is shimmering blue. Our gazes lock for a second and then his eyes flutter closed. He drops the sword.

Fuck!

No!

I leap to him right before he piles onto the floor.

I grab his shoulders except he doesn’t pile. He shakes me off.

The shimmering has stopped. Has he learned to stop the visions? Or was killing the Ethereal a way to put a stop to them?

“Simon, are you ok?” Whenever I am worried or emotional I seem to slip into the first name basis.

He closes his eyes and clicks his tongue on the roof of his mouth, like he is tasting something and deciding whether or not it is for his liking. I bring my hand to the nape of his neck.

“Simon, love?” He looks wobbly so I hold on.

He opens his eyes and they’re so, so extraordinarily blue.

Iceberg blue.

I take a step back, my hand falls from his neck.

I clutch my wand. The second spell that we’ve prepared. The back-up spell. Fiona’s failed!

Off with your head! I cast at the still floating Ethereal.

Nothing happens.

Another one bites the dust! Her body doesn’t move.

Snow laughs. Except it is not his laugh. It is distorted, twisted, like someone is wearing it inside out. All wrong.

I scramble for more killing spells, although I know it is feeble. She is not an ordinary mortal.

Ashes to ashes and dust to dust!

Nothing.

Nothing...

“Ethereal.” I steel myself.

“Vampire." She echoes.

Her voice is Snow’s voice, except cold, clipped. Her words are coming from his mouth and nothing rings additionally in my mind.

“I look so pretty, don’t I? Even after all this time...” the Ethereal speaks through Snow’s mouth and reaches out to touch the hanging wing of her floating body. She takes one floating snowflake moth on her forefinger and looks at it lovingly, “So pretty.“ It melts from the heat of her body and she bristles. Not how Snow usually bristles, but like a wild animal who accidentally entered a closed room and doesn’t want to be tamed.

Finally she turns her head and attention to me, while my mind is spinning with possibilities. It doesn’t look like Snow is there, inside his body. He’s in the vision. But if he somehow can hear, I yell: “Snow!”

She flexes his fingers, pops them one by one. “Snow’s not home, I’m afraid.”

“And thank you for closing the door,” she taps Snow’s temple with his fingers. “...now that your lover left for another time realm, the house is uninhabited and so, so spacious. I wonder what I can do from here. Let me see.. I’ve never done word magic, but I assume it is not hard if even halfwits

like him can manage it. Or shall I just stick to what I know?"

A reversal spell. I need a reversal spell. If she gets access to Snow's power, then really, we are both fucked. And the whole fabric of magic if she is to be trusted on this account.

I open my mouth to cast - even though I am pretty sure at this point that my magic tank is running on empty, I had too little time to recover and too many attempts at spelling her dead.

Even so, she doesn't give me a proper chance to try. She shakes her head and smiles wickedly. It is a mean smile. A distortion of the golden smiles that bloom on Snow's face when he looks at me.

"Push a button…." she says in a melodic voice and my fangs pop.

No!

With my fangs I have a lisp - I can't enunciate any proper spells. Now I can't even *try.* Even though I was bound to fail, I wished I could try. I can't just not try anything. Fucking useless.

"Should I push another button?"

"Shith, no!" My lisp is stronger because I am terrified of what might come next.

I make a move to get Snow's sword, maybe I can do something with it. If I knock his body out, will the Ethereal be freed? Probably. At least she will not have access to his magic anymore.

She steps in between me and the Sword. "tut tut". She picks it up and presses the tip in Snow's foot. I see and smell blood. She smiles just as she pushes it further into his foot.

"It's been so long since I've experienced pain. It is so...mundane."

And then the air builds with pressure around me. I recognize *this.* It feels like burning paper and breathing the singed edges in. It feels like pressure threatening to make your ears bleed. This is Simon before going off.

"How big a pop can I make, and how big a hole will it unravel?" she breathes in and Snow's chest expands. Ice cold blue stares at me from Snow's eyes. How do I stop this possession before she blows me off, Snow's body and Watford?

Really, fuck Watford. What would happen to Snow's consciousness if he has no body to return to? Will he get stuck in the potential future? Is that even possible with the originals dying?

I could make fire, I don't need words for that, but what good will it be? I grab the chair closest to me and throw it at Snow's head. Brute force. Something Snow would appreciate, were he to see it.

She blocks it effortlessly with his forearms, and they bruise, while she doesn't even flinch. The splinters start smoking in the air and then they flare into flames. The smell of magickal smoke mixes with that of real smoke. It burns my airways. "Flammable bloddrekka, what are you doing playing with a boy made of fire?"

Fire. yes. I can make that without words.

My chest is heaving rapidly. It's getting hard to breathe. If I make fire and more real smoke, will it be enough for Snow's body to shut down but not die? Surely that would break the spell and she would be banished from him? Will I be able to resist the smoke enough to save him after he passes out? Too many variables. I can't risk it.

What do I do???

SIMON

There is blood all over. In my mouth, in my eyes, in my nose, dripping from it on the ground. There is blood on the ground too. Not all of it is mine, mind you.

The hilt of my sword is the only thing not dripping in blood and that is because I spelled it a while ago, the grip is horrendous with a wet hand. Baz made crude jokes when I explained this to him. My heart quizzes at the thought that I might be too late. I glance at my ring, it still holds, magic shifts in its design.

I push the latest body with my foot and it slides off the blade like a piece of butter would slide off a hot knife.

I cast a spell to find Baz. He is somewhere in the tunnels. The Trickster that got him can't be far. His minion half army is dead, under my feet, crunching underneath like too many packs of potato chips. These creatures were a mix of goblin and animal, some even a mix of animal and plant. They fit right in perfectly with the comic con crowd above the tunnels, on the Normals stadium - they're celebrating the best fantasy adaptations on screen. If anyone saw the creatures they probably thought it was great cosplay.

I do not care for the number of deaths I leave behind, when the life of the man I love is at stake.

Fuck them all. They came after us. They came after Baz. Allegedly he drank from a doe that was a nymph in fact. Apparently some greek gods shit going on, involving a macho god that wanted the nymph and a Trickster that transformed her into a doe to keep his rival from getting the girl.

It happened while we were in the mountains. He went hunting because there was no local community of blood suppliers. I went with him. We frolicked on a meadow afterwards. (It was epic. I got leaves in all possible places.)

I finally get to a door and try to open it with magic. When that doesn't work I use my sword the old fashion way and splinter it to shits. I hope that no one from the raging comic con happening on the surface hears the noise that I am making and am about to make (I am talking about more death

and gore).

The room I enter is small and smells like rotten wet death. My Baz does NOT belong in such a place.

There are some broken chairs, a table that looks as if it was made long before tables were invented and in the middle of the room there is a circle with written symbols, in chalk, most likely. The Trickster is floating around the circle, chanting incantations.. In the middle sits a blacked out Baz. His hands are tied behind his back. His head hangs forward on his chest. He looks like a drunk who passed out. There is a trickle of blood that goes from Baz's wrists and follows the symbols. Almost all of them are red with his blood.

I approach them carefully.

The Trickster doesn't look at me but addresses me nonetheless:

"You've come too late, the ritual is almost over. Your vampire will lose his life force and die a slow agonizing death, while I will get the essence of his powers. For an immortal like me, they will be a nice little trinket. My revenge will be sweet!"

I roll my eyes, I have heard so many villains in this life. I have slain so many assholes, really, at this point nothing seems impressive. He doesn't take me seriously.

He doesn't know me. He doesn't know Baz. He doesn't know us.

I bet he didn't even do any research on us. Penny would laugh at this amateur.

"You're not from here, right?" My eyebrow has been slashed open and it is still bleeding, hindering my vision a little.

"I have descended from Olympus when the titans rose - " He begins. Bla bla bla so much talking.

One more step and he will be in my reach. The blood finally completes the circle of symbols and the Trickster exclaims in victory. "It is done!" He waits and I wait. Probably for something to happen.

"Don't know what you were trying to do exactly, asshole - " I ready my sword and cast

*" **Valar Morgulis** " at him. He frowns deeply at me. It seems a foreign expression on his annoyingly constantly smirking face. It's like he doesn't recognize what I am about to do.*

With one sweeping motion of my sword I hack at the Trickster's legs - they are the closest thing I can reach, he is floating a meter in the air. I get him right beneath his knees.

The valar morgulis makes him closer to mortal than god. He can bleed now. I am so grateful for the tens of thousands of Game of Thrones fans on the surface, celebrating right now. I am not sure this would have worked in another setting.

I feel a savage sense of satisfaction when I feel flesh, then bone, then the gush of blood pours on me. More blood. All the blood in the world for the love of my life.

" - but what you are planning to take away from Baz - his life force - is tied with mine." I show him the ring on my middle finger with the intricate design. He is a demigod aiming for god status and if he wasn't twisting on the floor without one and a half legs, he would surely see and recognize the magic swirling in the artefact, especially since it is of ancient Greek origins as well.

His face is in shock over the fact that he is bleeding like a mere mortal.

I plant the tip of my sword to his throat. A drop of blood appears. A couple more minutes and he will reverse back to immortality, growing his now one and a half limbs back and killing me and Baz.

"This was forged by the Fates, Trickster. The rings tie our lives together, balancing them out. A sacrifice of immortality - not that you would ever understand. As long as one's alive the other cannot die." I indulge in this flare for the dramatic. It's what Baz would do. "You should have done more research, you arrogant Godling, before coming after my husband." I push my sword through his throat, slashing it open and twist it to the side, opening him like a can of tomatoes.

His body drops. I know that he's not properly dead yet, and if I let him be now, he would start healing when the morgulis effect fades. So I do what usually requires two to do: ***Off with your head!*** *I simultaneously cast through my sword and use it as a weapon to decapitate him in one motion.*

Dead for good.

"Another one bites the dust!" his voice is angry and desperate.

I look behind me. There's no one. The words came from deep in the tunnel in what seemed awfully like Baz's voice. I must be exhausted and imagining things.

I hurry to Baz and start casting healing spells. My foot hurts for some reason and I make a note to examine it later. Baz is my priority.

I can feel my magic reserves waning. I have been casting left and right since the moment I entered these catacombs.

I untie his hands. There are marks around his wrists. I want to hack at the Trickster all over again for that.

The healing spells make his wounds pull together in thin lines. My jeans are soaked with blood of our enemies and now as I kneel on the symbols, with Baz's too.

I bring his hands to his lap, his Fates ring is still on his finger, thank Merlin! The rings are acting as a balancing force - it unites Baz's vampire immortality and my human mortality tampering them both down. Morgana, the life we've led. The life we're leading. I kiss his forehead, wiping away sweat and tucking his hair behind his ear, clearing his ashen face.

I cast ***Good morning, sunshine*** *with the last of my magic and he stirs. From the looks of it, most of his blood has been let out. His skin is greyish. Even greyer than when we were at Watford and he was surviving on rat blood.*

His eyelids flutter open.

“Simon?” He stares at me - I must be a bloodied mess. He notices the Trickster’s head on the ground.

“Did you Off with your head *him?” he asks weakly.*

I say flustered “Yea. Old instincts kicked in.”

“You’re pretty amazing, you know? Did the job for two people!”

“Stop talking. There are surely more creatures coming for us. We need to get you up and then we need to run. Yea?”

I use my sword to open a vein and bring it to his mouth. I hold his head with my other hand.

“Drink, Baz, drink.”

*****

We are running through the tunnels. I cast a find my way and we’re following the pull.

“Thnow! Come back!” his voice is loud in my ears. So close. So far.

I flinch and stop mid step. Baz bumps into me. He steadies us with one swift move. “What’s wrong?”

“You called me. You were far and close at the same time.”

He touches my face.

“Maybe I shouldn’t have drank so much from you, Love. Let me cast a healing spell.”

“No, don’t be silly, I’m fine. Let’s go.” W e start running again.

So much smoke.

“Do you smell smoke?” I shout at him. We are nearing a waterfall and the noise is starting to be deafening.

“What?”

“Something’s burning!” I yell.

“Another theal! Another agreementh for hith!”

Young Baz is staring at me. His fangs are out. Explains the lisp. We're in our Watford room. Something's burning. I'm about to go off.

There is a fire raging. I know what's happening here. Fuck. I got sucked in a vision and Vissa has the contro... -

"You alright, Love?" Baz's face comes into focus, wrinkles around the eyes, shadows underneath the eyes, brows furrowed in concern. My Baz.

My Baz is pleading - fangless- and she is considering. Although she is also suspended in the air just 2 meters away.

"I'll strike a deal with you." He offers, trying to mask his desperation with bravado. "You wanted to make me one of you? You wouldn't have to be alone in your quests for knowledge. I could join you." He looks desperate, so young, so lost, so afraid. What is he trying to do?

"Baz, don't!" I shout in his face and he flinches. The pull demands I follow it to where the sound of the waterfall is growing louder. But I can't.

"I need to go!" I tell my husband and kiss his mouth. For once I am not piggy backing but actually holding the reins. I cede them back.

BAZ

She is considering it. So I was right when I noticed the note of wistfulness in her voice. So I was right she wants to share all she's learned. She isn't so different from humans after all.

The magickal smell of smoke subsides. A good fucking sign.

She let me retract my fangs a while ago. I think she couldn't take me seriously with my lisp. I decide against trying an unsuccessful reversal spell. She is dialing it down, Snow's magic is no longer leaking like crazy.

"Becoming an Ethereal will take centuries!" she warns me.

"I understand how immorality works - you get to do stuff in longer intervals of time, Ethereal." I just want her to get on with it. If saving Snow is in my power I will do anything.

"I like your sass." she savours the word. "You are so young. I could use a fresh perspective on -" she keeps talking, vastly entertained by her own words. When I notice something odd. I think she doesn't notice because she is so deep into her rambling, musing the benefits of having me under her wing (literally) aloud.

I see a frown and a trickle of sweat on Snow's face. For one second the ice in the eyes disappears and I see a glimpse of Snow. My Snow.

He raises the sword. The Ethereal's voice shuts down completely, like turning down the volume on an especially annoying radio show. The ice blue disappears from his eyes. And there he is. My Simon.

I launch myself at him, supporting him when he almost crashes to the floor.

"It's you.. It's you!" I keep repeating, relief washing in waves through me threatening to buckle my knees. I thought I would never see him again.

He nods and then his face contorts and he says through gritted teeth, "Back up spell. Now!"

He raises his sword towards the Ethereal's floating body, I can see the battle happening inside him by the way his whole body convulses and twitches.

"I've no more magic!" I tell him. He swings his arm around my shoulders. His hand grips tightly at the place between shoulder and neck.

"Back up spell, Baz!" he demands in a voice that leaves no space for denial.

I raise my wand and as I am about to cast I feel like I've just been giving access to a well. A surge of power is filling me up from where Snow's hand is gripping me. My eyes widen with this electric feeling zipping through me. Our gazes meet for one second. A small nod.

"**Off with your head**" I below with magic and Snow's sword whooshes through the air and takes off the Ethereal's head just as I finish saying the spell.

The moth snowflakes fall to the floor - drops of rain.

Her body sizzles and convulses until it completely evaporates.

Snow collapses in my arms and I think I collapse in his. "Works only if you actually do the beheading," he murmurs.

***

Every bone in my body is tired. We drag ourselves to my bed since it's the farthest from the ex-ethereal snowflake moth puddle. I am thirsty, but I don't have the strength to go hunt. One of us opens the windows and lets air in. I am too tired to be bothered by the rancid smell of the merwolves.

I realize that the chair in the corner is still burning and I am so tired I am actually contemplating letting the room go up in flames. It's not a bad way to go - teaming up with Simon Snow in such a spectacular way.

Snow seems to start noticing his surroundings too. He drags himself up, limps to get his sword from where he dropped it after killing the Ethereal (we actually fucking did it!) and points it at the burning furniture.

"**Make a wish!**"

The fire dies. I am amazed that he has the strength to care enough to do it. He points at his foot and

casts a healing spell. He looks me over, trying to asses whether I need something like that or not. Our eyes meet and my breath hitches. Blue eyes, bronze curls, he wears his heart on his sleeve as he openly stares at me and I swallow back emotions threatening to overflow.

We unglue our gazes and he fuses the sword back in his hip, murmuring an apology as he handles it - probably for leaving it on the floor after the fight.

The night has fallen. He shuts off the lights and joins me in the bed.

We are both sweaty, dirty, sticky and dead tired to do anything else.

We go to sleep in each other's arms while dirty, sticky, dead tired and not really caring.

"I killed a godlike creature for you," he mumbles before falling asleep.

"I know. I was there, you git. I participated."

He chuckles and the sleep is so thick in his voice, "No, Baz. Another one."

He intertwines our fingers and none of us has any more calories to spare for words.

Tomorrow I'll have strength for banter, questions, answers... right now, I only have strength for sleep.

Chapter End Notes

So there you have it. No one fucks with our boys and gets to live.

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

SIMON

We wake up when the sun is high in the sky. I don't think Baz has ever permitted himself to sleep in anything other than bed appropriate attire. He gasps aghast when he realizes he did this last night. (AND didn't take a proper shower)

I giggle at his face. He looks horrified.

"Hey." My voice is raspy. "Come here," I beckon him closer and plant a kiss on his lips.

He moves away, "I'm smelly."

I sniff his shirt 'mmm'-ing and move as if to sniff his armpits. He jumps off the bed, scandalized. "No. Snow! No! Unacceptable! Unacceptable! No. Just no." he is outraged.

I laugh so hard tears come to my eyes. When the fit of laughter dies down in my belly, I lie on my back, propping my feet on the wall and letting my head rest on the edge of the bed. Baz and the room is upside down. I feel giddy. Drunk on sleep and Baz and victory.

"You're a heathen!" he bellows. "I can't believe you're the one my heart wants." he mutters more to himself than to me.

He gives me a rueful grin and points to the bathroom. "Give me a few minutes, please, I feel like a dry discarded sock. That you just tried to sniff. Yikes."

Before he goes to the bathroom I call after him, "Hey, Baz! You're also the one my heart wants."

He struggles to keep his face from breaking into a full blown smile but fails.

I smile back, baring my teeth.

After he cleans up, I do the same. I put on one of his many Property of Baz sweaters after I shower and wash my hair. My ragged painted nails stare at me from the mirror when I dry myself. I decide to redo the spell. They fit me.

When I come out, he's put the room back into order. He even managed to restore the burnt chair.

I bring out a basket with our battle clothes to take to the laundry room.

The small notebook I found in the Mage's office, the one with the nonsensical stuff written in it, falls from the pocket of his hoodie and onto the floor. It flops open. Baz picks it up and his jaw unhinges, eyes widen in shock.

"Where'd you get this crypbook from?"

“This what?”

“Crypbook, Cryptic book? No?”

It doesn’t ring a bell, no. I roll my lips between my teeth and suppress a laugh. He is such a nerd.

“You sometimes forget not everyone has an unhealthy obsession with books.”

He huffs. “You heathen, there is no such thing as an unhealthy obsession with books, unless one is putting their private parts in them. Obsession would imply too much reading, which is preposterous, to say the least! *This* is such a rare magickal object. Where’d you get it?”

“The Mage’s office,” I reply. *Your father’s office.* A voice taunts. I tell it to fuck off and it does.

I am annoyed a little that this stupid notebook barged in our perfectly light and carefree moment.

He shakes my shoulders. “How’d you get it?”

“A glitch I think.” It seems like it happened a million years ago. “I was thinking angry thoughts about the Mage and why he doesn’t want to have me as a son and accidentally leaked some magic into one of those thoughts. The notebook started thrashing about and it didn’t stop until I took it with me and then I kinda forgot about it, with everything going on.”

“Understandable.” He nods. “Yet unforgivable.”

I pout.

He kisses the pout away, “An exaggeration as a figure of speech, love.”

“What is it, what does it do?” I ask more because he wants to tell me than because I want to know, because really. I just want to not have to think NOR talk about heavy stuff at least for one damn second. I want to eat and touch him and be touched and snogged senseless. Is that too much to ask?

But Baz lights up at the opportunity to share some of his nerd stuff with me. It’s worth it.

“Basically it encrypts information for a specific person. The author can encrypt it for themselves or for someone else. No one except the recipient can read it.”

“Does this mean that the Mage’s secret plotting secrets could be here?”

“It definitely means that! What thought did you pour magic in, you wonderful ignorant being?” His insults are getting mellower by the second.

“Mmm, something about wanting to know why he lied to me?”

He is rubbing my shoulders like a villain would rub a cat’s back in a movie. “We could use this...”

“How?”

“It depends on what’s in there.”

My thoughts must show on my face because he says in mild outrage at my skepticism. “We just

killed a godlike creature, I think we can figure out how to decode *this.* ”

“Yea, that was battle and magic and defeating an enemy. This is braniac stuff. We should probably recruit Penny to help.” Merlin I miss her.

“We should definitely get Bunce to help! She’s brilliant!” His admiration of Penny only makes me want to snog him more. They will make good friends. (Oh Goodness, I will be the one they have to constantly explain stuff to.)

As we are leaving the room a thought pops in my head. A troubling one.

I grab his face and make him focus on me.

“Baz. Not for war stuff. Ok. We’re not decoding anything to use for war stuff, ok?”

He seems to process this, as if it takes him a second to remember which war.

“Fuck, no!” he replies when he finally gets what I am talking about. “You and me - we’re a team now. The team. Our goal is to defeat the Humdrum *and* the Mage and not to die and not lose each other in the process.”

I smile sheepishly.

“And to figure out the vampire stuff together.” I add softly.

He nods one curt nod.

“I like that.” My smile takes over all my face, it pushes my cheeks up until my eyes half close.

He smiles back and it is brilliant. “I like that too.”

“Let’s eat, love.” He extends his hand to me and I take it.

I know there is a lot for us to talk about like how I pushed magic into him the other night, but honestly, right now, holding hands and going to eat, I am so happy I don’t want to talk about anything. Fuck words and fuck spells. Too many revelations hang above our heads after 3 days of Ethereal induced horror. I just want to have breakfast with someone I love. With Baz.

BAZ

I watch Simon stuff his belly with food. I eat only half of what he is capable of. My fangs pop out only twice and even though I feel slightly embarrassed, there is no shame permeating it.

Watching him eat is always an entire show. He eats with abandon, like this is the first meal in a long time and certainly the last meal he will ever have. There is no finesse in his manners. His sole focus is on the food and watching him could be a form of meditation, I swear, like watching a rainfall or a bonfire. Elemental.

Just like watching him fight - Crowley - it’s like he’s never been in a fight and doesn’t know it can hurt, and like he will get no tomorrow anyway so he might as well give it all his best.

I watch him eat and try to not suffocate from all these feelings flooding me, filling my lungs with words of love that I can't fully articulate. His nails are painted and find that wickedly hot, he touches his face, his hair and me and I keep stealing glances at the blue and green on his nails and it makes me want to jump his bones immediately.

There is a message from Fiona on my phone. It keeps beeping as a reminder. a distraction from all things Snow related. It's like during these days together my cosmos has stopped expanding and instead imploded as a reverse big bang into one singe universal dot - Simon Snow. He fills my world from inside out and I am choked with feeling.

I do not want to listen to Fi's messages. She's probably announcing that she will be here to take me home in 5 minutes. She's probably going to chip away at the illusion that only Snow and I exist.

I do not want to leave this bubble. I want this bubble to be my forever home.

"Hey, Snow."

He looks up and mmms at me with his mouth full.

No manners really. Crowley, I am in love with a barbarian.

"Come celebrate Christmas with me and my family tomorrow?"

He chokes a little.

"You sure? Your parents hate me."

"Yea, well. I care more about spending time with you than their approval."

He looks shy, and his eyes shine.

"I'd love to, Baz. Thank you."

I'm in love with a boy with a golden heart and I am going to give him everything he needs to keep that heart safe.

I stand up and go to listen to Fiona's messages.

They became plural from the last time I checked my phone.

The first one is her freaking out over my request for the spell against the Ethereal. "The offing spell was contextual, For fuck sake, Baz! Can't believe you remembered *that. Don't* USE IT! IT WILL NOT WORK! We were at a football match, thousands of people on the stadium and millions at home. That was some power to harness with the red card spell. The referee kept showing it right and left!"

Well thank you for that, I could have used that when we were fighting the Ethereal. I think glumly at how stupid I must have looked with that Red card non-spell.

The next messages are inquiries if I am alive. Then she informs me that she is on her way, that she

will be at Watford by tomorrow and that she will manually melt the snow if she has to. (She sounds rather heroic.)

It takes me a moment to realize she means the snow outside and not Snow, the boy I love.

She assures me she will get me home to have Christmas Eve dinner with the family.

I send her a text message with emoji and hope it gives her a small heart attack for being a horrific mother figure for me. I never use emojis, due to the fact that I have some class and am generally literate. But I am feeling adventurous today, fuck decorum: *smiling poop, smiling evil devil, monkey shutting ears, monkey shutting eyes and a heart,* because I am feeling generous.

Then I send her another text message with actual words, because I am not a complete barbarian:
Dear Fi,

I am alive and well, not thanks to you. We killed a mind speaker and almost died. We - Simon Snow and I. We are coming home for Christmas together. We - Simon Snow and I. As a package deal.

See you tomorrow. Oh and bring food in the car. Something with butter. Ideally scones.

PS Do not call. I will not *be available.*

PPS Simon Snow and I will be a package deal from now on. Get used to that. Do not be mean to him.

Love, Basilton

We move sluggishly towards our room. Holding onto each other like drunks. I tell him that I love his nails and he gets flustered.

Then Snow proceeds to make detours to all the places where mistletoe hangs and snogs me against every surface he finds. His enthusiasm is something I would like to get used to. We're engaging in a historical gropefest in the halls of Watford. It's brilliant!

When we reach the room on the top of the stairs we are both winded - not from the stairs, but from all the pawing and heavy making out we've been doing while still managing to cover distance.

I like him greedy for me. I like him starving for me. It feels right. I like him panting in my ears and making small sounds of impatience.

Somewhere in the far back of my mind something tries to nag at me, that this wouldn't have been

real if he hadn't been affected by the visions, but I tell that voice to fuck off. If this isn't real, I don't know what is. I read somewhere that not everything you think is true. Not all thoughts are yours. I think I finally understand what that meant.

We stumble in the room, all hands and mouths and wanting more.

"We have less than 24 hours until Fi is here" I tell him. I see my reflection in the mirror and I look like I am on drugs. My hair is a mess and my cheeks are flushed for once. How? I thought all the blood went to my cock.

"Come here," he says. Which is a ridiculous thing to say because we are already so close I can feel his heartbeat on my own chest. Outpacing mine.

"I want to see you, take this off," he is pulling at my clothes chaotically. I think my kisses drained all rational thought from him, because he pulls and tugs and pushes like he forgot how clothes work. He falls on his knees, wraps his arms on my middle, fingers digging into my side and my butt. He bares my abdomen using his face to push up the fabric of the shirt and nuzzles there. He kisses the place right above my trousers, bites at the skin. Fuck. I don't mind him forgetting how clothes work as long as he keeps doing this. He has one hand on my butt, fingers sinking in my flesh, steadying himself.

Simon Snow is drunk on me.

His other hand finds its way to my front, rubbing my cock and the fabric adds a slight edge to the friction which makes me meet his movements half way.

I am drunk on Simon Snow.

He is fumbling with the zipper and growls in annoyance.

I moan and mumble incoherent sentences aimed at all divinities. Thank you Gods for this boy, Thank you oh mysterious Big Bang for this moment.

I manage to take off my shirt and sweater. He manages to undo my trousers and I fight to get out of them fully. He is holding tightly onto me, sucking above my hip bone. He hums and I am about to black out from want. I don't think I have any more blood left in my brain to think. Everything is down down down.

The only thing that keeps looping in my head is - why is he still dressed?

SIMON

Baz pulls at my arm and I stand up, licking my lips.

"I was not done there," I reprimand him.

“I know. You’re not undressed enough.”

He breathes heavily, hands roaming underneath my shirt.

I whimper when he rolls his hips against mine, his erection rubbing mine.

“Baz. I want you. Fuck. I want you so much.”

He kisses my mouth and slowly, delicately starts unpeeling clothes from me. His gentleness slows down my urgency, deepens it.

“No hurry,” he whispers, slowing us down. “Let me savour this. Let me savour you.”

His soft breath against my sensitive skin - where he’d nibbled enough to make my neurons run haywire - makes me shiver and I buck my hips instinctively.

We’ve been here before. I know this dance.

He walks me back to his bed and I fall on the covers, he places one knee between my thighs and lowers himself on me.

I know this, yet I don’t. I need this.

I arch against him, begging for more - more touches, more kisses, more contact, more closeness. Just more.

He kisses the side of my neck and his hand travels down on my abdomen and cups my aching cock through my pants.

Fuck, this always feels divine.

I freeze.

“No, Baz, stop.”

He stops moving his hand but doesn’t remove it from my groin. There is worry in his eyes as he assesses me.

I fight the urge to grind against his hand. I want him so much. But I can’t. Damnit.

I can’t.

Not like this.

I would be robbing us of something beautiful.

“No, I don’t want it like this.” He lets his hand drop and eyes me with apprehension. “The memories from the visions - they’re all in my head,” I hurry to explain before he gets to wrong conclusions and feels hurt. “I can’t make them fade. I can’t unknow them! I know what you like, what you don’t, what I like and what I don't. In the visions I mean.If we have sex now, with the visions in my memory, it would be like stealing our first time.” I am running out of air.

He brings his hand on my chest and kisses my temple once, softly. “Breathe, Simon. Breathe.”

I do breathe. He sits up and pulls me up as well. I wrap myself like a koala around him.

“What do you mean, love,” he says softly against my mouth. I brush my lips against his once, just because I can and he’s right here, before answering, before shutting this down.

“I want our first time to be awkward, and for us to learn each other’s wants and likes and dislikes. I want to learn where you’re ticklish, not just simply know it… It feels like cheating. I want our first time to be messy, fun, tender exploration. There is no exploration when there is knowledge and expectation. I can’t unlearn what I saw in the visions.”

We lie half naked on our backs. We hold hands.

“I am sorry.”

“Don’t be sorry, stupid. There’s nothing to be sorry for.” He kisses my hair. Why is he so Zen about it?

And then he laughs a bitter laugh and I know it sucks for him too.

“I want to forget every vision. I want to experience our lives together first-handed, not as a fucking rewatch.” I feel angry and bitter. We had such a lovely day, we had hours in front of us before we had to face the world of Mages with their wars and their lies... and I ruined it.

“There must be a safe spell for that kind of thing, no?”

He drags me to him and I lay my head on his chest.

“Selective memory deletion. There might be.”

“I want to try.”

He nods and his chin bumps my head slightly. He plants a kiss on that spot.

I want to tell him that I love him, but I don’t want the first time he hears it to fall under any shadow of doubt, under the shadow of the visions. I am not robbing him of that. I am not robbing us of that.

***

Later, we’re at the edge of the Wavering Woods, where the first vision came. I’ve got empty pages with me, Baz brought me some snacks (Merlin, how I love him) and he has the spell ready. His eyes are rimmed red, as if he has been crying which I know he has not, because we’ve been inseparable. I guess it just means that he really wants to. He must be thirsty too. He hasn’t hunted

yesterday. Before I propose he goes for a hunt, he says:

“You write down the memories from our future, and I will sit with you and not read over your shoulder and then when you’re done, I will kiss your mouth and you will cast the spell for every vision in a row.” He makes it sound so simple.

It sounds so scary.

“And then I forget everything that I write about.”

“Yes, the pages go blank. Memories are deleted.”

“What if I don’t have enough magic?”

“Now that’s a load of horseshit. Simon, stop stalling. You have enough magic.”

I feel like crying.

“What if I forget everything? Everything that happened during these days, with you and me, what if that goes too?”

“If you don’t write it down, it won’t go away. The spell is very specific.”

We make a fire to keep us warm (Baz does while I mourn the visions.)

Baz sits behind me, bracketing me with his knees, wrapping me in his arms.

“Wait. Before I forget everything from the visions. You should have this.”

I hand him a ripped page from the Mage’s Crypbook. I look at it and all I see is gibberish on a yellowish page.

“Read it afterwards. You’re the only one that can read it. There’s something that I think you need to tell me in the future for us to survive this. Everything you need to know about the humdrum and the mage and your vampirism I already told you.” He folds the note carefully and puts it in his inside pocket of the coat.

“And take this. There are answers here. For sure.” I give him the notebook itself.

He frowns at me.

“It feels like you are saying goodbye. You are not about to magick yourself into a coma, Snow. It’s a simple spell.”

“Simple if the memories I want gone aren’t too tangled with the others. Yea, I read the book. The way my heart beats for you seems quite tangled from my point of view.”

He turns me away from him and pushes the pen in my hand, the pages are on my lap.

“Write, concentrate.” He sounds so calm he makes me want to shout and kick, and so I bite my lip and keep quiet.

So I write and I cry, and sometimes I laugh with tears, because the life in the visions was so good. Because it was so real.

I don’t know how long it takes me, but I finish. The fire is already dwindling to a small flickering flame.

Baz takes the pages and arranges them on the snow.

I stand up and call my sword. It obeys.

I direct the sword to the pages and brace for magic, “ **It completely slipped my mind!** ”

I repeat the spell for every vision. By the last page I can feel it taking a toll on me. My magic comes out as a footnote - small and quiet, rather than as a title - bold and loud. But it’s still there. It should be enough.

I stare at the pages - the words are still there. They should have disappeared if the spell worked.

I look into my mind, the memories are still there.

“Baz!” There are tears in my voice before they reach my eyes.

“Give it some time, love.” His voice is soft but I can see it in his eyes that he understands it hasn’t worked. We stare at the pages. Nothing happens.

I do not want a lifetime of me always comparing our lives to those from the future. I do not want a lifetime of firsts that feel like deja vu-s. Of second-hand firsts.

“You’ll have to erase the past few days completely. That one should not backfire. If this spell is about precision and scalpel work, that one is about bulldozing every memory into the ground. I am good at being a bulldozer. Brute strength is my forte.”

He is already shaking his head and backing away from me physically, as if backing away from the idea. I reach out and grab him by the coat lapels, and yank him hard towards me.

“The fire, Baz!” He was backing away into the fire.

He pays no mind to it.

“You can’t delete us,” he says, desperation in his voice, anguish in his features.

“You didn’t even believe that there was an us until now,” I reason with him.

“I’m past that! It’s better than what we had before." he is all fire and burning eyes. "All we had before was distance and resentment and I had years of fucking yearning.”

“Better doesn’t mean good." my voice is resigned, but adamant. "We can have it good. I know we can. I’ve felt it.”

I wrap my arms around him and he buries his face in between my shoulder and neck. He has to bend down a little to fully hug me.

He is still shaking his head. “We are not deleting these days, Snow. Just fucking no.”

“It’s not just about your questioning of these feelings' validity. It’s also… Baz, I don’t want to always compare, I won’t be able to help it. I will compare our first time with our crazy sex shennaningans, I know who we adopt, where we go for our honeymoon, I know where we live, what wallpapers we choose, I know about what is happening with the Mage and Penny and you, I don’t want to live my life with one massive spoiler.” I brush away his hair, tuck it behind his ears. Kiss his right ear because it has this little crooked edge that makes him so endearing. “I was so dumb, Baz. To ask for a future that is unexpected, thus ruining its unexpectedness. I believe we can have a truly spectacular life together. I don’t want to ruin it by expecting it to be a certain way. I think you’ve had enough expectations thrust on you. I think that applies for me too.”

He stops shaking his head. I take it as a good sign.

“I don’t want to go back to hating each other.”

“You never hated me. And I never hated you. Not really.” he starts protesting but I bring his head back against me.

“I obsessed over you day and night. I thought it was hate. It was not.”

“Doesn’t matter. I can’t just have *this*… Can’t just have you for a snap of fingers and then have it all taken away. I will not survive it. It will hurt too much.”

“Oh, Baz, I will fall in love with you so hard and there will be no doubts there, no overflowing feelings to echo in my love for you, no spoilers of a life that might come true.”

“No. You are not deleting us.”

“I am not deleting *us* , I am giving us a chance to *be.* ”

He holds me so tightly, I don’t think he realizes he is using his vampire strength. He is crushing me to him.

I do not protest. It feels right.

“How will I explain to you that you're missing 3 days from your life? You’ll think it’s me plotting again! I hate it when you’re suspicious of me.” he laments.

I chuckle softly, “Just tell me I hit my head and have temporary memory loss. It’s happened before.”

He fumbles for more arguments and I can hear the anguish in his voice, “What if,” he swallows loudly, “what if this was the only scenario in which we get together?”

Now he is just being ridiculous.

“Pish! Just be nice to me. And I will come around. Feed me something with butter - there is no better way to woo me. Besides, you are Baz fucking Pitch, have you met *you* ? There is no way I don’t end up loving you like crazy. NO way. Just stop being a complete asshole to me. Dial it down, but gradually, or else I will be suspicious that it’s part of the plot. And feed me. You’ll see, I'll realize I am head over heels and will get clingy and needy and cuddly in no time.” I try to chuckle, but fail. It comes out a wheezing sob.

I think he is actually crying. It is becoming increasingly hard to breathe. His arms are a steel cage around me. A metaphor for a squeezing heart that fears it will be broken.

“And, then..” I wheeze. I am ok to die in his arms - this is the best way to go really. He is holding me so tightly, like he wants to pull me in his body, to make us one. “Then, after I'm properly wooed, we can plan how to defeat the humdrum, and how to find out what ...” another shallow breath. His hold is so delicious. He’s got me so close, so tight. “What the Mage is plotting.”

He lets go and air rushes in my lungs. I miss his hold even though it hurt. His palms cradle my face, gentle, gentle Baz, he brings me closer and kisses me. This kiss is an *I love you* , and *a goodbye* and a *please, please!* wrapped in one.

He steps back while I am still reeling from the kiss, points his wand to me and sings with magic. The song is so soft and the spell is so brutal. Bulldozer was a right word to choose.

Yesterday… All my troubles seem so far away…

Baz’s voice is the last thing I hear.

Baz.

I cry.

The snow starts melting. So it really was him that summoned it in an attempt to make me stay.

The sky clears gradually. We will be fine. We will. I will do everything right.

Snow is blacked out in my arms. I kiss his forehead and start planning.

I stop crying.

FIONA

I am gathering my things with the speed of light. I should probably magick them together, but I want to save the magic for clearing the roads to get to the sodding school.

“I’m a bad Aunt.” It keeps slipping out of my mouth and I can’t stop it. If this was a thought, I wouldn’t even look at it. But as words they’re loud and they linger and make me squirm inside. The words keep tumbling out of me for a while now. They’re rubbing off on me. Oh Crowley, could they be true?

“You’re not a bad Aunt,” Nico says and kisses my shoulder. I sag against him. Who am I kidding.

I am. Natasha would be disappointed in me.

“He could have died!”

“He didn’t.”

I will have to ask Basil how he managed to do that.

The story I told him when he was ten was not exactly accurate. I was dating a mind speaker, yes, I trapped him in my head - yes, but it wasn’t so that i could kill him! IIt was because I was jealous. And the red card spell? Who the fuck knew it would kill him? We were at a football match. I was into *him,* not football. It was during some big championship. The referee kept giving the players red cards. Everyone was buzzing with it.

I thought I was giving him a warning, a magickal spanking. Not *killing* him. I actually liked the git.

Fuck. I was an even worse girlfriend than I am an Aunt. At least *Basil’s alive.*

“I can’t believe I haven’t checked my phone for 2 days while he was calling. I am a horrible Aunt.” I do not add the implication that I was too busy caught in a shagging frenzy with Nico to check the phone.

“You are not.” Nico says kindly “And you’ve got a message.” he adds checking the screen.

I grab at the phone and read.

Dear Fiona,

Abort mission. Your services to drive me home for Christmas will no longer be necessary. I will be spending Christmas at Watford. Do not worry. All is well. Trust me.

Merry Christmas to you and the family.

I will be calling them shortly.

Love, Baz

SIMON .

I wake up at the edge of the woods. Baz is here, there is a fire. I try to stand, lose my balance and have to prop myself up on the soggy ground. Fucking Climate Change. We have the worst winter. No snow, just a prolonged annoying delusional autumn.

My mind is a mess. My body too apparently - my head is heavy and I am smelling food. Am I hallucinating?

I have to fight to remember what I am doing here. I was following him. Baz! The bane of my existence, the handsome bastard!

He is a vampire, but no one believes me! And then there was that Creature! She must have done something to me if I lost my conscience. I try to clear the brain fog and end up getting dizzier while shaking my head. (Maybe I picked the wrong strategy to clear the brain fog.)

That's when I notice that there is a figure sitting beside the fire.

Oh Merlin! I would know that figure from a thousand. Baz!

I summon my sword. And leap on my feet ready to fight him. My hand is trembling and I glare at his shape.

"What are you doing here?" I accuse. He turns to look at me. He looks tired and sad and a little relieved.

"Waiting for you to wake up, you snoring disaster."

"I don't snore!"

"Tell it to the birds that had to move a few forests away just to be able to have a conversation." he stands up and dusts off his trousers. He walks towards me sloshing through the mud. Ruining his boots and trousers. "I keep thinking I am rooming with a little tractor every night. Now's no difference."

I don't snore!

He comes beside me. I clench my sword tighter. I could take him any day. *(I think*)

There is something different in the way he watches me. I don't know why.

It makes me uncomfortable.

"What are you plotting, Baz?"

He rolls his eyes.

"You passed out, Snow. The only thing I was *plotting* was how not to let you drown in mud. Plus. I made roasted rabbit. Want some?"

Chapter End Notes

there's an epilogue ya'll!
I really like the idea that at some point Simon will realize his nails are painted and he is wearing a PROPERTY of BAZ sweater looool
what did you think? let me know, feedback and criticism is welcome. and grammar mistakes as well - English is not my first language though it is my beloved language

^^

EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE

Years later

SIMON

The Greek sun is shining generously over us. Baz is lying on a towel under a beach umbrella, glasses on, book in hands, knees bent, feet buried in sand. He looks like a picture from a postcard. Penny is visiting us today and then moving on. She is on a secret mission with a Normal I think.

No help needed, she assured us. "You're celebrating graduating from Uni, you deserve to rest." I tried to point out that she too, graduated from Uni but she refused to listen.

I stroll innocently to where a gorgeous unsuspecting Baz is anxiously hiding from the raging sun. I take his hand by the wrist. He lets me, because love makes him an unsuspecting adorable git.

"Penny, Penny look!" I call out. She is in her beach costume in the water. The Normal, Shep, is splashing water at her. He seems nice. Though I dislike how shady Pen is being when I ask questions about him.

She looks up at me now.

"I want to show you what true love looks like!" I holler.

I can see from here that she is rolling her eyes.

I see recognition in Baz's eyes as he hears me. He knows what's coming, I've done this before. I have been running on the beach playing with a dog whose owner fell asleep. My back is so sweaty it feels like it is coated with layers of slippery goo. Disgusting if I say so myself.

He groans loudly but doesn't resist me as I pull his hand to my back.

"Is it necessary, Simon? Is it truly?"

"Yes, babe. Penny needs to know that your love is true and burning bright, so that she can go do her thing with the Normal and not worry about me."

He rolls his eyes underneath the glasses. I can sense it.

"Penny! Penny! You're not looking!" I sound 5 years old but I don't care.

I finally place Baz's lovely dry (and cool) hand on my sweaty back.

"Look Penny, Look! Without hands!" I raise my arms in the air to show her, while Baz scratches my incredibly disgusting sweaty back, he's petting me and a rueful grin shapes his features, making Penny laugh heartily. (Shep joins in, he's not half bad, really)

I turn to Baz, grinning from ear to ear.

I pounce on him. He harrumphs when I knock the air out of him, but there is a smile playing on his lips.

“True love proven!” I declare theatrically and smother him with kisses. “Now what shall I do to prove mine?”

Some more years later

BAZ

There is something magical about snow. It falls slowly, waltzing a lazy waltz in the air, as if swayed by someone’s gentle breath. My head is resting on Simon’s abdomen, his hand is in my hair, fingers massaging my scalp.

We are both lying on the carpet, half naked and satiated. (we put on pants because it’s not really proper to lie about fully naked. You never know when your daughter might collapse the ceiling on your asses).

We’re watching the snow as it gently falls outside, just under the lamp light. The night casts shadows everywhere else. The yellow light of the lamppost makes the snowflakes look like falling stars. Thousands of wishes right outside our window.

It feels so good to simply be here. The quiet envelops us and the only thing I hear is the rhythm of Simon's heart, and mine, chiming in its own slower, steadier rhythm.

I stroke his arm with gentle fingers.

“Happy Anniversary, Love.”

He sits up and bends to kiss me but lacks the mobility so he reaches only my nose. I laugh and twist around propping myself on my elbows and meeting him halfway for a proper kiss. He bites my lip, “Don’t laugh. This was supposed to be crazy sexy.”

I laugh harder “It was!” He gently bites my jaw, my neck and then my earlobe.

Laughing becomes less possible when butterflies riot in my stomach.

Snowflakes swirl outside in spirals of soft glowing light.

We kiss. We laugh. We live.

***

THE END

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!